

DIVA

THE SEX
ISSUE



Lesbians have had ENOUGH!

**This is what you've told
us about FREE lesbian
online dating ..**

"Free means 'Plenty of Fakes'"

**"I am happy to pay to meet women
serious about meeting other women"**

**"I am happy to pay to meet genuine lesbians
who are also looking for love"**

**"I WANT A QUALITY SITE
WITH QUALITY WOMEN"**

**"I am happy to pay not to see
all the same women I see on
every free dating site"**

**"I am happy to pay to know
the site is being monitored"**



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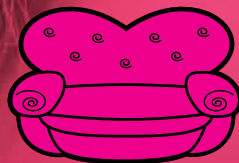
We had 120 people to our wedding and it was beautiful. We have been very happily together for five years with four kids, a dog, cat and fish. Thank you Pink Sofa. You literally changed all of our lives.

Kerrie and Sandy



I met my partner Annie on the Pink Sofa. Since then we have moved in together, started our own business and we got married in New York. It was the best day of our lives. We can't believe our luck in finding the perfect partner on Pink Sofa.

Kylee and Annie

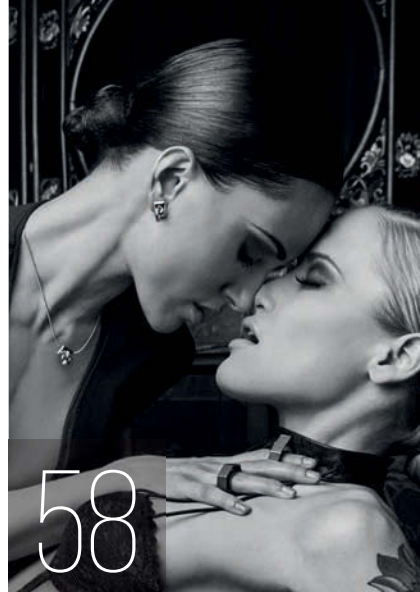


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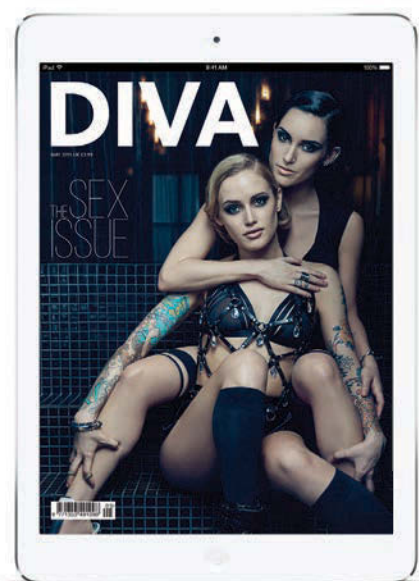


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Sophy Holland
sophyholland.com

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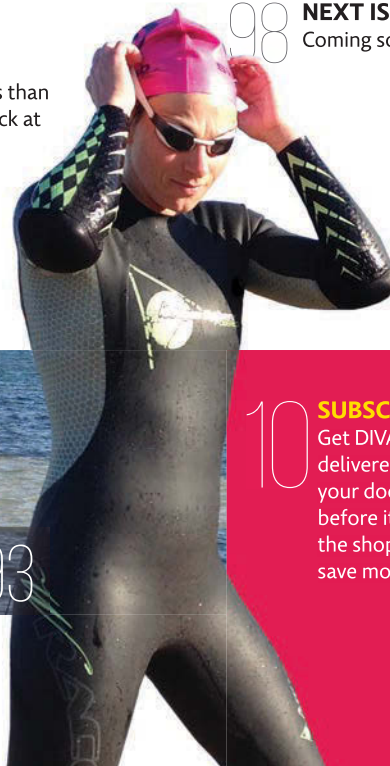
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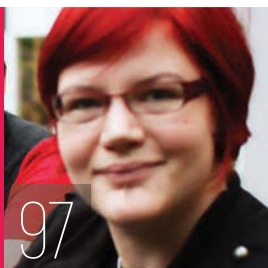
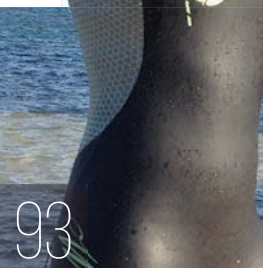
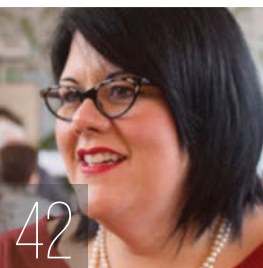
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EDITOR'S LETTER



Sex: the subject that draws us close and divides us from those who consider us "deviant". It's no surprise that **the Sex Issue** is our most popular themed publication annually, and this year we're thrilled to have been granted access to business trailblazer Cindy Gallop's **legendary Black Apartment in Manhattan** for our cover shoot (p58). In this issue we explore girl-on-girl sex culture through the eyes of bisexual journalist and blogger **Bella Qvist who responds to**

those tiresome "slut" accusations (p14) and bi trans woman Freiya Benson talks us through her **experience of dating non-trans women** (p57). In our show and tell feature on p51, we reveal **69 things you quite possibly didn't know about lesbian sex** – we know a fair bit and even we were surprised! If sex isn't what's keeping you up at night, perhaps **the forthcoming election** is? Read what Amy Lamé has to say about the state of the nation (p42) and take part in our online survey at tinyurl.com/DIVAElection. Finally, if you're a regular reader but still don't have a subscription to DIVA, never miss an issue and save 25% off the cover price – details on p10. Or save over 35% and access exclusive bonus content on your mobile, tablet or PC with a digital subscription – details on p94.

Jane Czyzelska
DIVAMAG.CO.UK

NEXT MONTH



JUNE ISSUE on sale 28 May

Orange Is The New Black is back! With season 3 the wait is finally over
Real lesbian lives: a former inmate tells DIVA about her life in a women's prison
Bisexual clubs, meet-ups and conventions: coming to a place near you!
We're here, we're queer, get used to it! The definitive guide to Pride events nationwide
1990s lesbians in pictures: a retrospective nod to the coolest decade for UK lesbians
Bare reality: Real talk from lesbian and bi women about their breasts
Silent Witness star Liz Carr goes to Egypt

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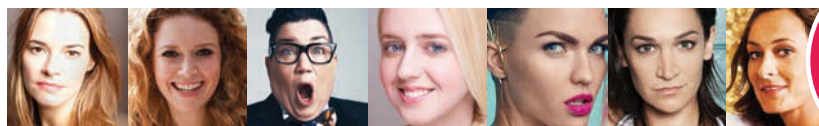
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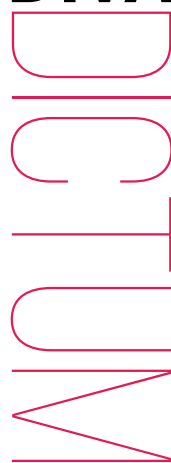


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DIVA



What would you give up sex for?

Editor Jane Czyzelska

"Lent"

Deputy editor Louise Carolin

"A million quid and a real live unicorn"

Editorial assistant Carrie Lyell

"A lifetime supply of halloumi"

Designer Fernando Safont

"The concept of giving up something for something is unknown in my planet"

Music editor Sarah-Jane Roberts

Books editor Eden Carter Wood

Film editor Lucy Peters

Travel editor Lucy Fry

Diary editor Dora Mortimer

Art editor Anna McNay

Sex/life editor Anna Sansom

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FROM 28 MAY 2015

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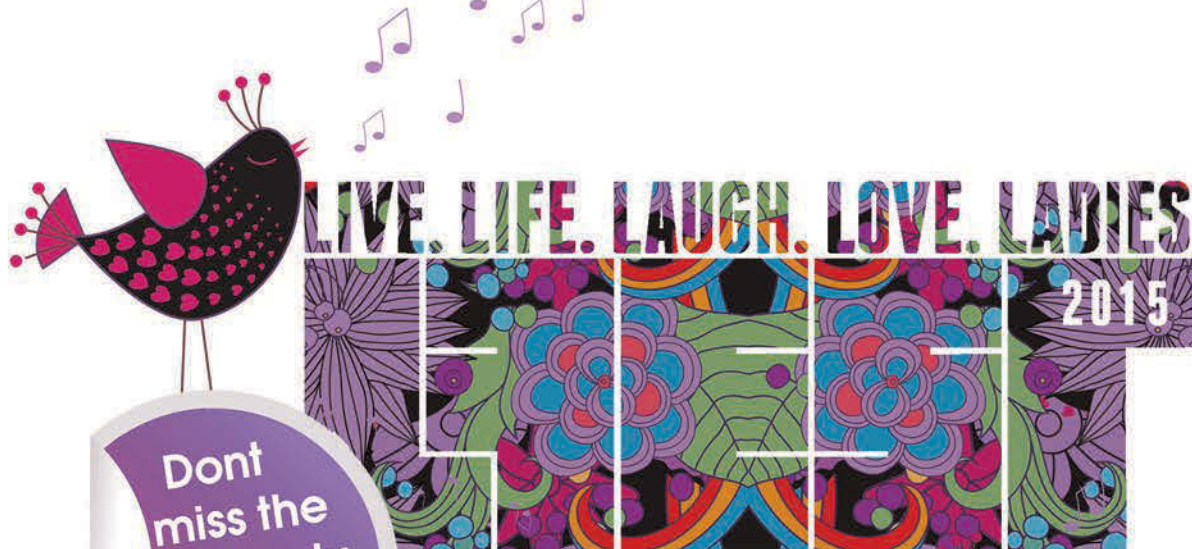
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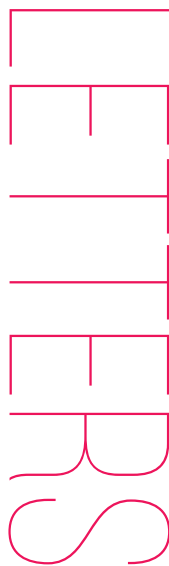
DONNA LOVES YOU, CAROLANN

I have been with my partner Carolann McLaughlin for 24 years; we have fought many battles and shed many tears. I am due to marry the love of my life on 17 April and want to ask if you could please give her little mention in your magazine, which she buys me every month.

She is the most amazing person I have ever met; she is drop dead gorgeous, as many people tell her, and I just can't believe she has stuck with me for 24 years. I can't tell her enough how much I love her – she is my life.

DONNA MARTIN, Glasgow

ED: Congratulations to Carolann and Donna. Twenty-four years is something to celebrate!



WRITE TO US

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or use the old-fashioned method and drop us a line at

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Great interview with @CaseyStoney & @MegsHarris7. Thanks so much for highlighting women's football #KeepingItReal

@naylatweetshere

Wenever I write for @DIVAmagazine my mum reads it. Then I imagine her secretly reading the whole issue, cover to cover.

@griff781131

Got my @DIVAmagazine from smiths today its the first time I've ever not gone to the self service till with the mag achievement or what!!!

@MissFayeTierney

Thanks for another great issue @DIVAmagazine x

@njs77

@CaseyStoney @MegsHarris7 definitely the best Diva cover there's ever been :)

@Blandiel

Fantastic to see @CaseyStoney & @MegsHarris7 on the front of Diva...

#OutAndProud as @FAWSL Players x

@drcalder

I love getting my issue in the mailbox each month! Nothing like this in NZ!

@TheOuting1

God no! @DIVAmagazine has just dropped in my door, can't read it now. Oh how do I wait?

@GemmaEllis_

Nice piece in @DIVAmagazine by @ruth_hunt about Stonewall's move to represent trans people/rights. Long time coming.

@Whackyrach

Must bi people hide their sexualities when they fall in love? Thank you @DIVAmagazine for not forgetting about us!

@DameAmy

Did a double take at @DIVAmagazine in a shop window – @vickybeecheing has an amazing mouth! What a stunner!

@BatColeArsenal

My dream is to write for @DIVAmagazine #lifegoals

Star Tweet

@emma_shone

Love @rubytandoh tweets about 'coming out' – sensed her joy through her words. Took me back to the feeling of when I knew @DIVAmagazine.

STAR TWEET PRIZE

This month's star tweet has won this gorgeous Grace Jones DISCO box. The collection, which isn't on sale until next month, is a beguiling time capsule, bringing together three pivotal, era-defining albums recorded in the late 70s which are widely thought to be the most disco sounding records of all time. DISCO is released on 4 May.



WIN!

CLARIFICATION

DIVA offers the following clarification regarding last month's article on nonbinary gender identities, Not This Nor That (April, p42), and apologises for any distress caused: *Nat Titman believes that they would have undergone the same medical treatments for gender dysphoria regardless of societal acceptance, but would have transitioned directly to an openly nonbinary identity had this been presented as an option in 1999. Additionally, specific details of their medical history given in the article were factually incorrect. See tinyurl.com/PracticalAndro for more information.*

Opinions expressed by correspondents and contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors of DIVA magazine or its publishers.



Last month's cover stars, Casey Stoney and Megan Harris

OBITUARY: DIANA CHAPMAN (1928–2015)

A pioneer, who broke the silence which, for centuries, had kept homosexual women living in shame and lonely secrecy, died in March 2015. In the 1960s, Diana Chapman and her then partner, Esme Langley, put a classified ad into newspapers, inviting women to contact the Minorities Research Group in Broadhurst Gardens, London, ostensibly to explore a topic they thought had been ignored. The ad brought a continuous flood of welcome from isolated women and indeed filled a social gap until the Women's and Gay Liberation Movements started a few years later. From the beginning, joyful parties filled the little flat as women from all over Britain congregated. The research aspect was not entirely forgotten, as Di and Esme began a newsletter, Arena Three, which evolved into Sappho when a much more out organisation was later established. Gay Lib and Women's Lib unfortunately rejected MRG as too middle-class, but then the L-word became the proud term we use today for women's sexual/romantic desire for each other. Di Chapman was born in Bristol but as an adult went to Australia for several years where she trained as a dentist. Returning to London she successfully practiced the profession she came to loathe. She is remembered by her friends as a jolly, kind and gregarious person who enjoyed fast cars and flirting with pretty women. Esme Langley died some years ago and Di had a second partner, Rosie, a TV journalist. They lived in retirement with their cats in Anglers Lane, Kentish Town, til Rosie's death four years ago. At the end, Di was alone with her aged cat Timmy when she suffered a stroke and died a few days later. Her humanist funeral at Golders Green Crematorium was attended by a number of elderly women, one of whom, there with her partner, remembered the original MRG as a lifesaver calling to her in her small country town in the early 1960s. Di's funeral does seem to mark the end of an era in lesbian life but it also marks the brave beginning of a stage in women's emancipation.

JEAN THOMSON

PHOTO L+R

Pleased to meet you!



Every issue, we invite one of our readers to tell us about her relationship with DIVA.



NAME & AGE:

ISA WUERTH, 38

FROM:

SWITZERLAND, NEAR ZURICH

OCCUPATION:

ACCOUNTANT/COMMERCIAL

IDENTITY:

LESBIAN

WHAT MADE YOU START READING DIVA?

Discovered DIVA when I studied English in Edinburgh back in 1997 and had my coming out phase, looking for advice and role models.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A READER?

Started in 1997, subscribed in 2011 and occasionally read when I could get hold of it during holidays.

PRINT OR DIGITAL?

Prefer print.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT DIVA?

Role models, news, reviews and features.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF?

Gossip page like in L-Mag (Germany), more coming out stories and world reports.

WHO ELSE READS YOUR COPY?

My girlfriend, guests, English-speaking friends.

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR COPY WHEN YOU'VE READ IT?

It goes into a literature basket in the bathroom, so anyone going to the toilet can have a read.

WHO WOULD YOU PUT ON THE COVER OF DIVA AND WHY?

International lesbians who make an impact, like Anne Will and Mirjam Meckel.

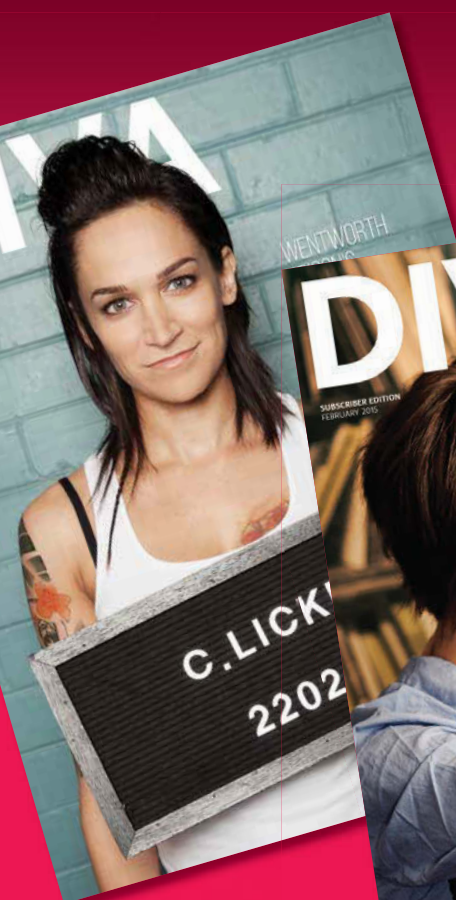
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DV227



Sex on the brain?



During the BFI Flare film festival recently, I was sitting with a friend who asked me how I was doing. I said, fine,

but isn't it strange that here we are on this planet, members of the same talking, upright species descended from monkeys, and all around us are other monkeys, in skinny jeans, or in printed dresses, or in drag. And downstairs, in the auditoriums, hundreds of monkeys sit in the dark waiting for a famous monkey to appear on screen. And what they really want is for the famous monkey to put their lips against another monkey's lips and then copulate so everybody's identities can feel affirmed. She looked at me and said I sounded like I might be having some kind of breakdown. I said yes, probably – a tiny monkey breakdown of no consequence at all.

A few days later I was on Skype and talking to a friend who lives in LA. Like most people who live in LA, she is having a hard time because she doesn't feel like her interactions with other people are meaningful or real. Through monkey ingenuity we are able to see and hear each other even though we are seven hours apart and five thousand, four hundred and fifty-

four miles away, yet our relationship feels more concrete than most of the fleshy interactions we have. Our queerness gives us access to a rich subculture, but it also places us in a tradition of self-enquiry, and increasingly we look around and feel eerily detached. In a bid to ease this we go out. We meet hot people. We swap numbers. We text. We make out. We start getting down and it will be a pleasant distraction from terrifying things such as the fact that this country is being taken over by far-right monkeys in purple e'en as we speak.

Then something weird will happen. Thwoopthwoopthwoop. The familiar sound of a recoiling vagina. Because what got us going was something else. It was the conversation. It was the protracted fantasies. It was the hope that maybe we'd be able to relate differently. It was the hope that maybe we'd end up somewhere different. And now we have come to this physical moment. We know what should come next – we've seen it before in a million books and films, but somehow that's not what we want. So we back out. The display of conventional rituals kills something inside us. So we kill the moment by saying we can't do this. And we feel awkward and fraudulent.

So my LA friend and I have invented a word: mentalsexuality. We enjoy the

THERE'S A BIG PROBLEM WITH MODERN HOOK-UP CULTURE, SAYS JAY BERNARD

way it fails to roll off the tongue. She describes it as "the natural antidote to the quotidian depersonalised nature of traditional sexual encounters in modern hook-up culture". In English: it's a nod to the sense that something is amiss – that we feel bored and betrayed and sometimes like we're losing it – and to how much we relish ideas, kissing (which, if you think about it, is two brains trying to touch) and playing with pain and endurance, above conventional sex.

Somehow these things feel connected. Somehow the interrogation of our desires feels very necessary. Somehow the political/sexual routes we once travelled have become signposted, paved over, littered with tourists and new-builds and Wahacas. Somehow what was once vivid and real has become flat and alienating. It's hard to shake the feeling – in the midst of an election year, when four monkeys in suits are scrabbling for a mandate to further undermine and destroy the neighbourhoods and institutions that harboured and created us – that something important has been lost.

As Sarah Schulman puts it in *The Gentrification Of The Mind*, "complex realities have been replaced with simplistic ones". Monkey queer. Monkey mad about this. Monkey mentalsexual. ①

Kissing, if you think about it, is two brains trying to touch

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So, I'm a bi slut?



It was a regular Tuesday; I was searching the internet for videos on the topic of bisexuality for DIVA's Hi Bi!

Tumblr blog when I came across a forum discussing not the topic that I was Googling but *me*.

I was stunned. Out of everyone that these people could be discussing, they were talking about my YouTube videos and articles and the general consensus was that I was a terrible person because I'm bisexual. A "bi slut", one person said whilst another announced that I would be leaving my long-term girlfriend for a man any day now. Wow.

What was even more perplexing was that the women discussing me in this way were lesbians – or at least their semi-anonymous online profiles said this. Now, there was a time when I thought the LGBT community stood up for each other, and I still like to think this is the case, but lately I've been wondering if the B in LGBT might be one of those silent ones, like in doubt.

I have learnt that the relationship between lesbians and bisexuals can be complex but to be told, time and time again, "Nope, you can't enter

this Facebook group because you find Aragorn from Lord of The Rings fit," is getting a bit frustrating. I mean, I don't need your group anyway – that's right, I can get my cute kitten fix somewhere else – but, you know, it's the principle. We both love vagina, so why are you hating on me? **insert cute Puss in Boots meme here**

It's made me wonder (and I'm sorry for going all Carrie Bradshaw on you) if the online bi-bashing translates into real-life cat-fighting. Are lesbians making new dates look at pictures of Ryan Gosling, measuring how much they salivate? Are they asking bisexuals to steam their vaginas before they can enter their house? I jest, of course.

The serious question is whether lesbians actually think bi women are more prone to "being sluts". How does one establish that another person is a slut? What is a slut, even? Are we talking prostitution? (I mean, I once asked my girlfriend to finish the washing up before getting down and dirty but I don't think that counts as sex work.) And is sluttiness really linked to bisexuality?

In order to be sure, I Googled the definition of slut and funnily enough I found no mention of bisexuality anywhere. Nada, zilch, nothing. Strange, no?

SHOCKED TO FIND HERSELF DERIDED AS A "BI SLUT" ON THE INTERNET, BELLA QVIST TACKLES ONLINE BIPHOBIA

I Googled the definition of slut in order to be sure

The general conclusion instead is that a slut is a person with a big sexual appetite. That's not a terrible thing in my book – sex is an extremely pleasant activity and having a lot of it can be good for your wellbeing. However, the word slut is largely used in a derogatory way and while I think I can follow the moronic thinking of a person calling a bisexual a slut, I also don't.

Just because a person can fall in love with someone regardless of what their genitalia looks like, that doesn't mean they will get into bed with every person they meet. Lesbians don't do that with every girl they see, right? I mean, I thought the U-Haul thing was pretty well-established by now.

Jokes aside, ladies, people's characteristics are not determined by sexuality and it is wrong, unfair and frankly as ridiculous as the thought of Shane having a bad hair day to attach sexual promiscuity to a person because they are bisexual.

Speaking of Shane, the lesbian Lothario that (almost) every woman has wet dreams about; I think it's fair to say that she sleeps around and yet because she only goes with women she is hailed as a hero, not a slut. Why is finding men attractive such a heinous crime? They're only men; ie people, just often somewhat furrier than your average woman.

So, to those of you who say things like "bi slut", I say: feel free to discuss whatever you like, but know this – I'm not a slut. I am bi, and the only one acting dirty is you.

Now to find the perfect meme for that. **D**

What are you thinking? Let us know.
letters@divamag.co.uk
divahibi.tumblr.com

DEFINING SLUT

"A dirty slatternly woman", "an immoral woman" or "a female dog" – *Collins*

"A woman who has many casual sexual partners." – *Oxford Dictionaries*

"A slovenly woman" – *Merriam Webster*

"A woman who has sexual relationships with a lot of men without any emotional involvement" – *Cambridge Dictionary*

"A woman with the morals of a man" – *Top entry, UrbanDictionary.com*



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I'm getting older and it's alright

CHARLOTTE COOPER CONSIDERS AGEING



My hair is looking fantastic at the moment. I don't know why I ever dyed it because I enjoy its natural colour, a rich

brown with ginger highlights and now silver coming through. I have a patch of grey on my right temple, some grey in my eyebrows; it looks pretty.

I'm starting to get old. I didn't expect to get older and for this to be alright. There's quite a bit of early death in my family and I still feel cautious about assuming that I will live longer than my mum and dad, neither of whom reached the national average for life expectancy when they popped off. Meanwhile, menopause is on its way, thank god. My potential fertility has always felt like an albatross around my neck and I'll be really glad when that bird has flown.

I'm noticing this stuff more than usual because I have some big anniversaries this year. One of my loves has just turned 50, a transition we celebrated with a ridiculous trip to the ABBA Museum in Stockholm, one of the cheesy wonders of the world. Soon we will be marking our 25th anniversary together, a silver jubilee. We should issue some commemorative coins and have a street party. I've been with

my other love for 19 years, which is certainly worth a cheer too, especially from those doubters who say that poly is for people who can't commit. 2015 will also be my 20th year of living in London's E15. I remember when the Holiday Inn used to be a pub where you could go and see strippers.

My friend Heather McAllister, who died at 38, considered old age a privilege that she would never get to experience. Sharing and witnessing people's lives over a long period is bliss. I live for the self-knowledge and acceptance that comes from intimate relationships with people and places over time, even when they severely get on my tits. The long view is about perspective and understanding. It can't be faked, it comes from work and it looks nothing like an ideal that you might see depicted on the telly or in an advert.

I am friends with people who weren't born when I first dated my loves. It's weird to imagine them growing from a collection of cells to a fully formed adult in the same period of time, weirder still when I meet their parents and find I have more in common with them.

The housing situation for this generation is so dire at the moment that it's beyond imagining that you could live in the same place for so long. I don't believe in luck but I have benefit-

ted from being born at a time when people like me could get a mortgage or a council place, hence stable and cheap housing, and have free education, with grants even. About 30 years ago the government actually paid you to go to university, imagine that! But the political climate means that I will likely have to work until I drop, no early retirement, nice pension, cushion of inherited wealth or quality health and social care for me, and maybe not you either. I also wonder how classism, homophobia, fat hatred or sexism will reveal their long-term presence in me.

I resent the cat lady stereotype that gets invoked when you start talking about becoming an old woman, as though crazy, dry and lonely is all that you can be or become. It's ageist. I'm not starving for older friends and role models and, let me tell you, these people are mofos of the universe because they've had to be. But I really love having been around for a bit and being able to see things come, go and come around again. Queer life can be so youth-orientated, it's hard to transmit what you know to people younger than you, and hard for many older people to listen to what new generations have to say. Everyone thinks they know it all. **D**

charlotte@divamag.co.uk

I resent the cat lady stereotype of older women



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TALKIN' 'BOUT AN EROTIC REVOLUTION

In 1992, Ky Hoyle opened Sh! Women's Erotic Emporium in a little-known east London neighbourhood called Hoxton and simultaneously kick-started a revolution in the way women's sexuality was perceived. Appalled by the "alienating, intimidating and sleazy" atmosphere of the so-called private shops that were the only place she knew of to buy a sex toy, Hoyle decided to open a shop of her own.

"There was nowhere for a woman, whether straight, lesbian, bi or proudly label-less, to explore her individual sexuality away from the pressures of what it is to be 'sexy,'" recalls Hoyle, who started her business with just £700.

Sh! quickly took off and attracted not just adventurous lady shoppers but the attentions of the media, the council and the law. Following headline features and TV appearances, Hoyle found herself in court arguing that Sh! was not a sex shop operating without a licence, and won.

Having introduced the British

MAKE SOME NOISE FOR PIONEERING EROTIC RETAILER KY HOYLE OF SH!

"All women's sexuality is equal at Sh!"

public to the delights of the "Jessica Rabbit" vibe, she went on to launch a dildo manufacturing wing, creating the kind of bright, safe, practical strap-ons and harnesses she and her customers wanted.

"All women's sexuality is equal at Sh! – that's why, whilst we section the shop and website to help customers find their way around, we don't give any more prominence to certain sections, nor hide or downplay others, because that equals marginalisation," Hoyle asserts. "Whether you're into kink, looking for a strap-on with your girlfriend or a little pink vibrator on your own, it all has the same importance at Sh! because it's all to do with discovering your own unique sexuality."

After more than 20 years in business, Hoyle has grown Sh! from a one-woman show to a staff of 16, and seen a revolution in the female erotic market. According to one survey, 40% of British women aged 18-70 now use sex toys, with the global female erotic market worth \$8 billion, and rising.

A three-time award-winner for retail innovation, Hoyle continues to develop the business and now, as well as toys, outfits, accessories and lube, offers customers unique Sh! Soirees, "the modern alternative to the usual sex toy party", in their own homes.

Firm in the belief that all women are entitled to sexual pleasure, Hoyle and her team are working on a new kit for sufferers of vaginismus, to be available through the NHS, and recently launched We Won't Be Shushed in partnership with the My Body Back Project, a monthly support group for survivors of rape and sexual assault, which aims to help survivors rediscover sexual pleasure and confidence (tinyurl.com/DIVAShushed).

Still leading the field, Hoyle mentions that the team is currently at work on a new strap-on accessory she promises will be a "world first". What will it be? Keep your eye on Sh! and find out. **D**

sh-womenstore.com



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It's getting hot in here...



When I was told that this column would be in DIVA's Sex Issue, I shuddered. I wouldn't say I'm uncomfortable

talking about sex, because the fact is I'd really rather we didn't talk about it at all, thank you very much.

I know, I know. I'm a strong, independent woman, in charge of my own sexuality, and should be comfortable talking about all things pleasure-based, but I'm not. A brief perusal of social media and magazines indicates very clearly to me that it's very fashionable these days to be all chatty about fantasies and sex toys but even typing this sentence has made my face flush.

And let me be clear, it's not just lesbian sex that makes me uncomfortable. I'm the kind of woman who will walk out of the living room when there's a moderately racy love scene in *Holby City*, shouting, "Does anyone want a cup of tea?" I am, at my core, a repressed woman trapped by embarrassment and painfully conscious of how old-fashioned I feel because of it.

Of course, you wouldn't necessarily know that I'm hideously repressed if you met me in person. My prudish nature may come as some surprise

to those who have seen me on stage, where my persona is a woman who can flirt with anyone and will confess all with gay abandon. But when I'm performing my stand-up shows I'm a different person, a character almost. Me, but amplified by 100%. I'm not *Dapper Laughs* by any means but I'm not afraid to be sexually forward if it fits the show.

The real me is incredibly shy, and I've never been comfortable in any situations that involve sex (or even the mention of sex). My inability to embrace the foxier side of me contributed to the many barren single years I endured in my 20s.

When it came to chatting up women, I was as successful as a penguin competing in the 100 metres at the Olympics. I'd stand at the end of the bar with a lukewarm bottle of beer, terrified to speak to anyone. And if I did pluck up the courage to chat someone up, I was generally so inept that I rarely got past exquisitely-formed chat-up lines like, "Do you know where the toilets are?"

I was always intensely jealous of the women at the Polo Lounge in Glasgow who seemed to have absolutely no problem putting it all out there, dancing in vests and jeans, tattoos glowing in the disco lights. I couldn't do it. I've always been much

IT'S FINE TO BE A BIT SHY ABOUT SEX, SAYS SUSAN CALMAN

happier discussing documentaries about trains than grinding away with a stranger. A lot of how I feel is a result of how I was brought up. My family don't talk about such things, and it's not just because I'm gay. It was an unwritten rule in my house that no one talked about sex. Ever. To do so would be almost as hideous a social faux pas as talking through the Six O'Clock News on Radio 4.

Part of me would like to be more open about sex but then I wouldn't be me. And it's easier said than done to undo four decades of repression just by mentally applying baby oil to myself, rolling around in front of a log fire while moaning and dripping ice cream over my head. For a start, I don't have a log fire and the ice cream would just make the carpet sticky. But more importantly, I think it's fine that some of us are a bit shy about the bedroom. It counteracts the people who are happy to talk about their favourite porn films over a cup of tea.

What is positive about my decades of repression is that I know that no one will ever release sexy pictures they've taken of me. Because there are none. A strip-tease for me is taking my duffle coat off. Really slowly. Now that is sexy. **D**

susan@divamag.co.uk

For me, a strip-tease is taking my duffle coat off



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What's sexy?



I won't lie to you, when you get an email from your editor entitled "Sexy Time", in which she tells you she wants

something "original" and "hilarious" about sex on her desk by Monday, it's pretty bloody daunting.

What if I don't live up to her expectations? What if it's just not funny? Now I'm too focused on the outcome to allow myself to enjoy the process. I'm imagining the worst, the horror of my measly efforts leaving us both decidedly unsatisfied. After all, you're only as good as your last attempt. Oh dear, I'm clearly suffering from sex column performance anxiety.

I need to calm down, it's not like I've never done it before. So far I've done threesomes, sex dreams, cocks and scissoring. Perhaps that's the problem. What's left? Sex is such a well-trodden topic, I fear I'll never find any virgin territory. I begin by flipping through my sexual Rolodex, pen firmly in hand, searching for some new angle.

What about when the opportunity for sex presents itself but you're in the middle of your work? So you put the work down in order to have the sex, but everything's moving so fast

SARAH WESTWOOD'S GOT SEX COLUMN PERFORMANCE ANXIETY...

Sex is such a well-trodden topic, I fear I'll never find any virgin territory

your brain is on a lag. The body's into it but the mind is still resolutely trying to solve the work problem, meaning your inner thoughts are an odd work/sex mash-up, rather like a remix of Dolly's 9 To 5 blended with the Benny Hill theme tune. One part of your brain is going "Yay boobs" and the other is still trying to wordsmith a client's advertising strapline: "What about, Progress since 1930?" So as you're getting into the sex, your mind is spewing out random words like, "Yay! Progress. Boobs! 1930."

Could this be my elusive column topic? My girlfriend's not convinced that it paints her lovemaking in a particularly favourable light and it's vetoed.

A sex column featuring my cat? That's always funny. Like, you know, when you are at a critical moment in sexual proceedings, and suddenly the cat wanders in, and you clock her but just hope she'll keep her trap shut just long enough to let things run their course, and you try not to think about it and just keep going, but right at the crucial moment, she lets out a really loud, attention-seeking meow, and it's really odd and off putting, but you've gone too far to turn back, so you just have to go with it and let the cat be part of this intimate moment. And so the last thing you hear is a

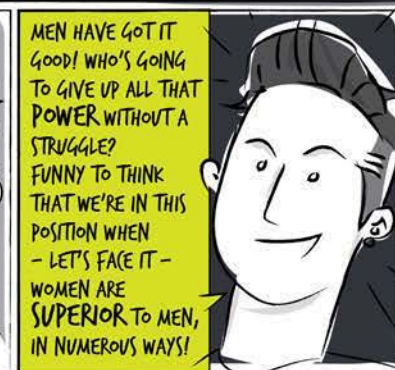
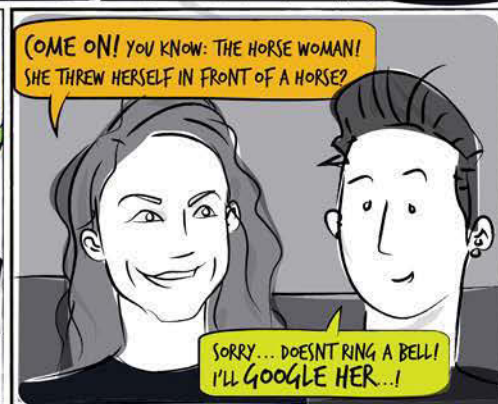
cat's meow ringing in your ears, and when it's over, you turn to the cat and say, "Thanks for making that really bloody weird". Is that funny? A bit niche maybe.

No, I should stick to something with universal resonance. What about this? You've been with someone for a long time and you know each other so well that the sex runs like a well-lubed machine, until one night, for some odd reason known only to the universe, it doesn't. Everything goes tits up and you're suddenly not in sync at all. In analogous terms you've gone from a perfectly-choreographed Argentinian Tango on Strictly, to a pair of upturned turtles on a David Attenborough documentary, on your backs and flailing wildly. There's an accidental elbow to the groin, someone leans her full weight on a tit that's masquerading as a pillow, and an ancient shoulder injury resurfaces as you try to manoeuvre her into a clinch. You both know in your hearts that you should just call it a day, but sex is a bit like Mastermind. There's a "We've started so we're going to goddam finish" mentality.

And on that note, I'm totally spent. I've been trying to raise a humorous sex anecdote for hours now, but nothing has really hit the spot. There's only one thing for it. I'm going to have to tell her I've got a headache. **1**

ON HOW LIFE IS...

SIT BACK AND ENJOY THE RIDE AS GABE, YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD LESBIAN, NAVIGATES THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF LIFE. YEAH... SHE MAY NEED A LITTLE HELP.



PERSON OF THE MONTH

KERRY WASHINGTON

We're giving props this month to Scandal star Kerry Washington, who gave us all a lesson in how to be an ally at the GLAAD Awards in March. "Being an ally means a great deal to me," she said in her powerful speech as she accepted the Vanguard award from Ellen Degeneres. "So I'm gonna say some stuff." Washington used her platform to talk about how those of us who are "othered" have been pitted against each other, and said: "We can't say we believe in each other's fundamental humanity, and then turn a blind eye to the reality of each other's existence." Washington, who plays political fixer Olivia Pope, also called for more LGBT characters on TV. Right now, we'd be pretty pleased with more Kerry Washingtons on TV.



Some of the detox drinks and smoothies in the BoBo's Juicery range are pink and blue, but thankfully the folks at Bohemian Bourgeois don't believe in gendered marketing ploys. We drank all 12 bottles over a full day and although a bellyful of liquid might sound hardcore, it wasn't – at least, not in a bad way. It's a good idea to cleanse your digestive system every three months, apparently – kind of like a car service, only your body's the hardware getting the service. And unlike many of the liquid-only regimens out there, we didn't suffer a headache or hunger. Result. That, we're told, is down to the clever nutritionist-approved mix of nutrients in each bottle. Drink all 12 for a full day's detox or take one or two for a super-healthy, tasty and energising snack between meals. DIVA readers can claim a 15% discount on all products with the code diva15 at checkout until 30 June 2015. (JC)

bobosjuicery.com

WE TRIED...

GENDER-NEUTRAL JUICE CLEANSE



CELEBRITY TWEETS

@ParisLees

I've been off Twitter most of the week, come back and search for my name on here, and no one decent is slagging me off! Really disappointing.

@TheEllenShow

It's really just a modern twist on a classic story – Boy meets girl, boy gets a lesbian pregnant, girl gets deported. #OneBigHappy

@Ispraggan

Had a dream I went sledging with Taylor Swift last night. Today is a good day.

@EllenPage

Dogs have a lot of secrets.

@zoelyons

Having been born in Wales to an Irish father and English mother the six nations are a confusing time for me.

@sarah_campbell

One Direction #DescribeYourSex-LifeWithABand.

@katemoennig

I still feel like I'm 16. Then I remember I saw The Goonies, ET and Spacebars when they came out in the theatre. #realitycheck

@NicolaAdams2012

Telling me I can't = Best. Motivator. Ever.

MEDIAWATCH WITH CARRIE LVELL

CELEBRITY GOSSIP SPOT



Some people love to make assumptions about women who like women, as if our identities are public property, and this month has been no exception. We were rather excited when we learnt that Orange Is The New Black

star Taylor Schilling has been cosying up with Sleater-Kinney guitarist Carrie Brownstein. But while we were wondering when we can hang out, others were questioning whether the Netflix show had turned the actress, who plays Piper, into a lesbian. Because of course, that's how it works. Never mind that it's none of our business.

Another woman in the public eye facing similar assumptions is Ruby Tandoh, a food writer who first found fame on The Great British Bake Off. Even before she came out earlier this month on Twitter, the 23-year-old was accused of flirting with judge Paul Hollywood to better her chances of winning the competition and since, despite not once using the words gay or lesbian or bisexual, countless journalists and bloggers have taken it on themselves to label her sexuality for her.

Refreshingly, Bella Qvist's piece in The Guardian didn't take that path. Instead, she wrote: "She might be a lesbian, she might be bi, she might not care and really, it shouldn't matter. She doesn't conform to hetero norms and that's that, out of the way, done."

Taylor and Ruby might decide at some point to clarify their sexuality, or they might not. That's fine. Our identities can be messy and complicated and changing, but the most important thing is that they are ours alone to carve in our own time, on our own terms. No one else has the right to do that for us.



DON'T MISS

EDINBURGH NIGHT RIDE

Looking for a challenge? Why not saddle up for a marvellous midnight cycle through the iconic streets of the Scottish capital this summer? On 20 June, hundreds of cyclists from across the UK will pedal their way through past sights including Arthur's Seat, Holyrood Palace and Edinburgh Castle to raise money for their favourite charity. Whether you're a bicycle beginner or two-wheeled wonder, everyone is welcome to participate as an individual or a team, and registration couldn't be easier.

Pick your charity and sign up now at edinburgh-nightride.com.



Just when you thought the selfie had been done to death – here is a product taking self-portraiture to a hole (sorry) new level. The Svakom Siime is a new sex toy which allows users to film their love-making *from the inside*.

Dubbed the sex selfie stick, this vibrator – which retails at £120 – includes an HD camera and all recordings can be uploaded to your phone or laptop via FaceTime for the ultimate sex tape.

A spokesperson from UK stockist Lovehoney said: "Ever wondered what happens inside the body during climax? Now you can find out. The sex selfie stick allows users to get to know their body in its entirety thanks to the remarkably clear footage this camera captures."

Try it yourself – just don't share that selfie on social media.

lovehoney.co.uk

WTF??

SEX SELFIE STICK



A woman with short, spiky blonde hair and blue eyes is smiling at the camera. She is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, a black vest, and a black tie with a pink and white plaid pattern. Her arms are crossed over her chest, and she is wearing a silver watch on her left wrist. She is standing in front of a light-colored wooden wall. To the left, there is a blurred background of green foliage and a table with pink flowers.

EVEN
BETTER
THAN
THE
REAL
THING

STEPHANIE BERMAN HAS INVENTED A SEXIER WAY TO GET PREGNANT. LADIES, WE PRESENT THE SEMENETTE

WORDS JANE CZYZSELSKA

After two attempts my wife found she was pregnant

PHOTO JOVEE PHOTOGRAPHY

Have you ever imagined a sex toy that squirts? And what if that toy could be used to combine self-insemination with fun and pleasure? Meet the woman who created The Semenette.

DIVA: We're intrigued! Explain to us what The Semenette is.

STEPHANIE BERMAN: The Semenette is a high quality dildo, made in the USA from medical grade silicone, which provides couples with the ability to have penetrative sex and mimic an ejaculation. Our toy is unlike any other, in that you are able to remove and replace the custom tubing, custom tip and custom lock after each use. This eliminates any concerns about toxicity or using something contaminated. Of course, the toy itself is dishwasher-safe. Additionally, there is a chamber on the base of the toy that allows the tubing to lay flat, so when someone is wearing this in a strap-on harness, it doesn't protrude. We really tried to consider not only the functional standpoint, but also comfort and pleasure as well.

What drove your invention?

I have been working in the women's reproductive health industry for my family business for the last 11 years; I have dedicated my career to helping couples achieve their goal of having a family. When my wife and I started that process, I quickly realised how few ideal options there were for us to try to conceive at home. We didn't have the financial means, or the desire, to have a doctor inseminate my wife – we really wanted to do this at home on our own. After making a few attempts at home with a turkey baster and needle-less syringe, we were both very unfulfilled by the experience. It was so impersonal, not romantic, and really just outright awful. I wanted more for us – and that's when the idea for The Semenette began. I did a lot of research and development, and finally ended with a working prototype, which my wife and I were able to try out. What a difference a dildo makes! This product

I invented allowed for my wife and I to have a romantic, intimate, private and pleasurable experience *together!* The best part of our story is that after two attempts with The Semenette, we found out my wife was pregnant. It was at that moment I realised I had a great product, which not only felt good, but it actually worked too.

How practical is The Semenette? Does the success rate match those of couples who try the "turkey baster" or other methods?

The effectiveness of the product is hard to measure, due to the fact that I am only aware of the success stories people are willing to share with me. That said, I know for sure of about 15 success stories which have resulted in babies since our launch. That may not seem like a large number, but for the amount of people who are willing to actually share their stories with me, it's a number I am very happy with and proud of. Additionally, the success rate with any kind of home insemination, including heterosexual couples having intercourse, is 5-25%.

Like anything, there are no guarantees for success. However, my wife and I had success with the toy as well as several other couples, so the toy does work; we just cannot give any guarantees.

You've won a few awards for innovative technology – what does this mean for you and the brand, and where it could it take you?

It's been a huge honour for me to be awarded technology accolades and awards. I'm not great at math and numbers, but I am a very visual and creative person, and I think the awards are a testament to others who may have ideas and dreams of inventing products. You don't have to be the greatest engineer in the world to invent something – you just have to have the vision, the passion and the drive to see it through. For me, the awards have

motivated me even more, to continue to innovate and see how else I can push my own limits. I am dedicated to making The Semenette a household name, and then pursuing the creation of other accompanying products.

What criticisms, if any, have you received about the product?

The main criticism has been about how realistic the toy looks. I have had a handful of lesbians tell me that they don't like how it looks so phallic, and how it only comes in anatomically realistic colors. I can surely understand their perspective, but there are also lesbians who prefer realistic-looking toys and don't mind natural colors. It's hard to please everyone, but our goal is to evolve and grow and try to meet all of our customers' wishes and desires. It is why we have recently launched an Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign, to raise funds in order to create V2 of The Semenette, which will include different colours, sizes, and textures of our flagship toy.

We're sold! How much is The Semenette and where can British DIVA readers get hold of one?

The Semenette retails for \$139.95 (USD). It may seem like a luxury price-point for a sex toy, but when compared to traditional IVF methods, which can range from about \$12,000–\$15,000 in the USA each time (and also does not come with a guarantee), it's certainly an affordable alternative. With studies also published about how female orgasms can assist in successful pregnancies, using The Semenette is an intimate, bonding way for couples to conceive at home.

We are working on adding UK distributors and retailers, but for now, the best place to order The Semenette is via our website, TheSemenette.com. We ship all over the world! **D**

You don't have to want to get pregnant to have fun with The Semenette. Turn to p47 to find out how our reviewer got on with the toy.



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ESSENTIAL SONGWRITERS

MATTHEW E WHITE

Fresh Blood (Domino)

On his long-awaited second album, Matthew E White channels the spirit of 60s soul, 70s funk and vintage R&B. Orchestrated by his Spacebomb Collective, it's a lush album layered with uptempo grooves, exquisite strings, shuffling percussion, swooping choruses and White's warm, heartfelt declarations of love.

VILLAGERS

Darling Arithmetic (Domino)

One of 2015's loveliest albums, Darling Arithmetic features nine beautifully crafted new songs by Villagers. Gently strummed acoustic guitars, brushed drums, piano and strings provide the perfect backdrop for Conor's melancholy melodies and distinctive vocals. Little Bigot, Soul Serene and Hot Scary Summer also showcase his most poetic and heart-breaking lyrics.

DOWNLOAD THIS

KATZENJAMMER

Rockland (Propeller)

Norwegian quartet Katzenjammer sound like they're having the time of their lives on Rockland. A radio-friendly affair, it's packed with energetic songs that straddle stomping blues, thigh-slapping country and rumbling roots-rock. Orchestrated with banjos, kazoo and washboard guitars, it also features four-part vocal harmonies.

IF YOU LIKE AFROBEAT

THE VERY BEST

Makes A King (Moshi Moshi)

Recorded by Lake Malawi with local musicians, singers and choirs, Johan Hugo and Esau Mwamwaya's third album is a fab fusion of dub, electro, pop and Afrobeat. Sublime vocal chants and melodies rise and fall above the duo's dusty drums, joyful percussion and fantastic rhythms. Tune in.

DISC



Spellbinding: Nadine Shah

NADINE SHAH

Fast Food (Apollo)

Nadine Shah demonstrates why she's one of the most arresting artists since PJ Harvey with her magnificent second album. Matador, Divided and Living capture her crooning over gorgeously restrained guitar and strings whilst Stealing Cars, Big Hands and Fast Food are underscored with wondrous piano and bass. All 10 songs are sublime but it's Shah's bittersweet lyrics and commanding vocals – one minute dramatic, the next sensual – that should leave listeners spellbound.



LONELADY

Hinterland (Warp)

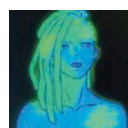
Recorded in Manchester and Michigan, LoneLady's new album is a bold tapestry of punk-funk, minimal techno and NY no-wave. Deeply rhythmic, it layers her repetitive vocals and elastic guitar spirals over lean grooves, catchy synths and vintage drum machine loops.



PALE HONEY

Pale Honey (Bolero)

Another effortlessly cool girl-group, Pale Honey have produced a promising debut that falls somewhere between Honeyblood and Warpaint. Some songs are slow-building with singer Tuva Lodmark crooning over sparse synths, whilst others crackle and explode with bursts of frenzied guitar. Play loud.



KELELA

LA artist Kelela and producer Arca team up for this shimmering and sensual, digital R&B bomb with fab beats.



TORRES

Brooklyn's Torres croons about faith and hypocrisy over taut drums and circular guitar on her magnificent and menacing new single.

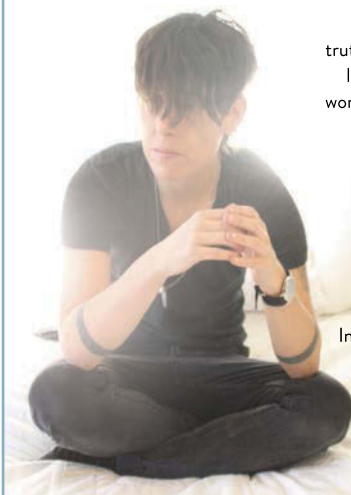


ROSIE AND THE GOLD BUG

Cornwall's Rosie and The Gold Bug fuse Kate Bush-esque vocals with euphoric synths and loops on this dancefloor-friendly single.

3 BEST TRACKS

ANDREA GIBSON



Andrea Gibson is not gentle with her truths. It is this raw fearlessness that has led her to the forefront of the spoken word movement – the first winner of the **Women's World Poetry Slam** – Gibson has headlined prestigious performance venues coast to coast with powerful readings on war, class, gender, bullying, white privilege, sexuality, love, and spirituality.

New Book Out Now:
In **PANSY**, Gibson balances themes of love, politics, sexuality, illness, family and forgiveness with stunning imagery and a fierce willingness to delve into the exploration of what it means to truly heal.

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THE NEW GIRLFRIEND (UNE NOUVELLE AMIE)

Dir François Ozon



Even when it's a deeply serious activity, male cross-dressing is rarely portrayed without the artistic equivalent of a wink and a grin. François Ozon steers a very tricky course between dark subject matter and light comedy in this film about David (Romain Duris), whose femininity flowers in the aftermath of his wife Laura's tragic death. At the movie's heart, however, is a sensitive portrayal of Claire (Anaïs Demoustier), Laura's grieving best friend, whose feelings about their former relationship become clearer as David provides her with a substitute for his wife. Claire's attempts to embrace life with her "nouvelle amie" are both touching and fun. In cinemas 22 May

EXIT

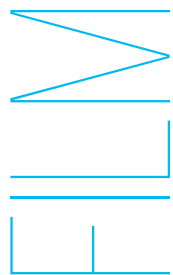
Dir Chienn Hsiang



This bleak comedy from Taiwan follows a lonely woman as she struggles to make her life a little bit sweeter. Ling (Chen Shiang-chyi) is a garment worker who spends her free time in hospital caring for her mother-in-law. Her family habitually ignore her and she's undergoing early menopause. Former director of photography Hsiang's debut feature brings poetry to Ling's private life, gently observing her efforts to feel special and her desire to get closer to somebody, even if the unlikely object of her interest is the blindfolded burns victim in her mother-in-law's ward. Quirky but profound, Exit packs a serious punch.

In cinemas 24 April

ONLINE



Curiously intimate: Juliette Binoche (left) and Kristen Stewart

CLOUDS OF SILS MARIA

Dir Olivier Assayas

It seems as if the more tomboyish the part, the better Kristen Stewart gets. In this heavyweight drama of ideas, set behind the scenes in the world of stage and screen, she perfects the role of a personal assistant with a powerful androgynous presence. The chemistry sparkles between K-Stew's Valentine and her boss Maria, an old-school Hollywood star subtly conjured up by Juliette Binoche. In their curiously intimate relationship, it's hard to tell who's really running the show. This mystery fuels the film's most fascinating scenes, making other aspects of the narrative fall a little flat, but it's still a must-see.

In cinemas 15 May

CATCH IT THIS SPRING DANCE-BASED LESBIAN DRAMA

Set in the snows and woods of 19th-century Sweden, *Sea Without Shore* captures the sudden end of a relationship between two women. It's a gothic drama with a difference – co-directed by and starring choreographer Fernanda Lippi, it uses dance and Victorian lesbian poetry to tell a haunting tale.

Find upcoming screenings at [facebook.com/seawithoutshoremovie/events](https://www.facebook.com/seawithoutshoremovie/events).

DVD THE DUKE OF BURGUNDY

If you thought your relationship had its peculiar moments, you'll be reassured by the lovingly complicated dynamic between the heroines of Peter Strickland's latest film. Somehow, it manages to turn a tale of bondage-obsessed lepidopterists into a tender, funny meditation on desire and togetherness. Worth watching and rewatching.

On sale from 27 April

WATCH THIS SPACE CAROL

Patricia Highsmith's classic 1950s tale of lesbian love isn't going to be a queer secret for much longer. Todd Haynes' adaptation, starring Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara as the housewife and shop assistant who enter into a dangerous romance, is anticipated for release later this year. Keep your eyes peeled.

Find out more at [facebook.com/Carolmoviefans](https://www.facebook.com/Carolmoviefans).

ONLINE

COMIC OH JOY SEX TOY

A weekly comic updated every Tuesday bringing you everything and anything relating to sex, sexuality and the sex industry in a funny, interesting and accessible way.

ohjoysextoy.com

PORN AUDIBLE PORN

A unique collection of sexy sounds including sex, masturbation, confessions and much more. All the audio is anonymously submitted, leaving your imagination to fill in the rest. It's hot.

audibleporn.tumblr.com

BLOG DO TELL

A compilation of personal stories about sex and sexuality. They say: "Speaking our truths, with all their complications and imperfections and beauty, challenges a culture of shame that impacts us every day."

dotellstories.tumblr.com

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ACROSS THE POND

ORPHAN BLACK

Season three of this brilliantly addictive show hits BBC America on 18 April, and we're waiting with baited breath to see when it'll be picked up by a UK broadcaster. The previous two seasons were shown on BBC Three a few months after it hit US screens, so we're hopeful we won't have to wait too long to catch up with Sarah Manning and the rest of the clones. Just be wary of spoilers!

BBC America, 18 April

ON OUR RADAR

AKA JESSICA JONES

If this new Netflix series isn't already on your radar, it should be. Not just because it features a lesbian kiss, but it helps. Based on the Marvel Comics character, the series premieres later this year and stars Krysten Ritter, David Tennant and Carrie-Anne Moss, who plays Harper. The Matrix actress was seen locking lips with a blonde co-star on location in New York last month, but you'll have to wait until it hits screens to see what that's all about.

Netflix, TBC

NOW FILMING

UNFORGOTTEN

DIVA favourite Nicola Walker (Last Tango In Halifax, Scott And Bailey) returns to our screens as DCI Cassie Stuart in new ITV crime drama, Unforgotten. The six part series, which focuses on a murder that took place 39 years ago, asks questions about our changing society, how well families really know each other and whether justice can ever be too cold to serve.

NOVEMBER



Will we still love them? Electro Velvet, the UK's Eurovision entry

PICK
OF THE MONTH

EUROVISION 2015

Vienna is calling this month as Eurovision hits town for its 60th anniversary, and this year's show will be bigger and camper than ever, with 27 countries competing for the coveted title, including Australia. Yes, the borders of Europe are being stretched somewhat as our friends from down under are invited to the special anniversary to honour the cult following that Eurovision has in Oz. And that's not the only first – it's also the first time the spectacle will have an all-female presenting team. Hopefully it'll also be the first time in a long while that the UK actually does well, but having heard this year's entry, we're not holding our breath!

BBC1, 23 May



WHAT WE'RE WATCHING

THE CLARE BALDING SHOW

Following a successful run on BT Sport, Clare Balding's fantastic show has been picked up by BBC Two, and we're loving joining her on the sofa every Friday night for interviews with the best athletes in the world. With past guests including Martina Navratilova and Dame Kelly Holmes, we've got a feeling she's got some pretty special guests up her sleeve for the rest of the series.

BBC2, Fridays, 10pm



DON'T MISS

THE VOTE

Fans of Last Tango will be pleased to hear Nina Sosanya is returning to our screens for a special one-off TV event in May, and should be safe from traffic as the action takes place in a fictional London polling station. The Vote will be broadcast live from the Donmar Warehouse during the final 90 minutes of voting on election day, with Sosanya joining a stellar ensemble cast including Judi Dench and Mark Gatiss.

More4, 7 May, 8.30pm

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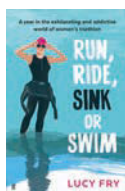
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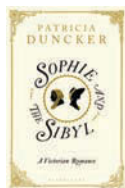
NON-FICTION
**RUN, RIDE,
SINK OR SWIM**
Lucy Fry

Having decided to investigate the appeal of women's triathlon, DIVA's travel editor Fry embarks on a quest to do five events in a year. Can she stay on track? Will her wife find the process unbearable? One for the tri-curious. See *Fitness*, p93. Faber & Faber, £12.99



FICTION
**THE GRACE-
KEEPERS**
Kirsty Logan

Circus performer North and her bear companion, and solitary gracekeeper Callanish, who tends ocean graveyards, inhabit a fantastic watery world in this remarkable story about love, family, roots and obligations from debut novelist Logan. A colourful magic realist novel about finding your place. Harvill Secker, £12.99



FICTION
**SOPHIE AND
THE SIBYL**
Patricia Duncker

This playful literary romance set in 1870s Berlin features George Eliot and a cast of characters, some of whom are borrowed from Eliot's own novels. A witty examination of the relationship between authors and publishers from an award-winning writer and academic. Bloomsbury, £16.99



CULTURAL HISTORY
THE VAGINA
Emma Le Rees

Opening with the search for a suitable word for the female genitals, the author's vivid voice makes this book a must-read. Informed yet funny, it looks at the history of the vagina through literature, film, TV, and visual and performance art. (AM) Bloomsbury, £13.99



FICTION

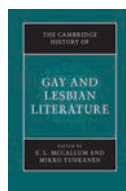
TINY PIECES OF SKULL

Roz Kaveney

Well-spoken, cream cake-loving Annabelle meets beautiful but unreliable American Natasha and, in a memorably queasy scene, is soon convinced to get spur-of-the-moment breast implants under a local anesthetic. Then she's leaving London to visit Natasha in Chicago, where she discovers she must fend for herself, working on the bar scene alongside a supporting cast which includes neighbour Alexandra and her python Randolph, bottle-blond Nazi sadist Inge, numerous johns and

dodgy cop Detective Buncley, whose appearances carry a threatening edge. "Most of it happened, more or less," notes Kaveney of events in this whip-smart novel, a portrait of late 70s trans street life written in 1988 but never before published. How great that it has been now. It's a story of friendships, flawed and genuine, and of self-determination and resilience, but one which doesn't dip into sentimentality; Kaveney has a superb gift for dialogue, with her main characters wonderfully adept at trading cutting put downs, charmingly delivered under a polite veneer. A sharp delight.

Team Angelica, £9.99



ANTHOLOGY

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF GAY AND LESBIAN LITERATURE

Eds EL McCallum and M Tuhkanen

With subjects as diverse as cross dressing on the early modern stage, lesbian pulp fiction, African literature, Sappho, modernism, diasporas and queer 20th century poetry, this volume of 39 critical essays by leading scholars in the field is truly impressive in its scope. Wonderful stuff, if pricey. Cambridge University Press, £115

STONEWALL YOUNG WRITERS' COMPETITION LAUNCHED

We're thrilled to see a great new opportunity for young writers emerge this month, as Stonewall, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans equality charity, launches its first Young Writers' Competition. Authors between the ages of 14 and 17 are invited to submit short stories and poems that support the theme of "LGBT equality: changing hearts and minds".

Entrants can submit work in two categories, poetry and short stories. A winner will be picked from each category, with entries to be judged by best-selling author SJ Watson, poet Dean Atta and Stonewall CEO Ruth Hunt. Prizes include a £150 book token, with two runners up from each category receiving £50 book tokens.

The deadline for entries is 22 May 2015, with the winners expected to be announced on 15 June 2015.

For more information on the competition and how to enter, visit stonewall.org.uk/youngwriters. You can also keep up with news on the competition by following the hashtag #StonewallYW on Twitter.





FALLING FOR CAROL MORLEY

CARRIE LYELL
CAUGHT UP
WITH THE
WRITER AND
DIRECTOR TO
TALK ABOUT
HER NEW FILM,
THE FALLING

I first fell for film director, screenwriter and producer Carol Morley after watching *Dreams Of A Life*, a beautiful and heartbreaking documentary about Joyce Vincent, who died in a north London bedsit and wasn't discovered for three years. Now Carol is back with her first feature film, *The Falling*, released this month, and it's wonderful.

Set in an all-girls school in 1969, the film explores what lies beneath a mysterious fainting and twitching epidemic which threatens to engulf the whole school. At the centre of this outbreak are Lydia Lamont and Abbie Mortimer, two smart and rebellious 16-year-olds that the other pupils admire and adore.

One of the things that struck me almost immediately was the intense friendship between Lydia and Abbie, played by *Game Of Thrones'* Maisie Williams and newcomer Florence Pugh. Not only are they incredibly tactile, but they carve their initials into a majestic oak tree at the start of the film and vow never to lose touch.

Lesbian alarm bells were ringing in my mind, and I wanted to know more about that relationship. Was I imagining a sapphic subtext? "I haven't told anyone this, so this is a DIVA exclusive," Carol laughs. "But I see it as a love story between Lydia and Abbie."

Relieved that I wasn't just seeing what I wanted to see, I wondered, was that deliberate? And if so, why not

PHOTO PAUL MARC MITCHELL

make it more obvious? "The coming of age and coming out story is quite often done, isn't it?" says Carol. "There are other ways of exploring young female sexuality, which I think is fairly fluid. There are crushes on other girls, there's maybe crushes on teachers. There's sexual desire in all of that, but I didn't want to overstate that aspect."

The Falling sees Lydia and Abbie blur the boundaries between friendship and romance, but neither make it clear exactly what their relationship is. How would she describe it? "I feel that Lydia would genuinely want to have a relationship with Abbie, but Abbie wouldn't with her. Although there's an intensity from Abbie, it's an unrequited love," sighs Carol, looking a little forelorn. "It's a bit heartbreaking!"

Lydia, it seems, is portrayed as someone unsure of their sexuality or certainly unsure of how to define it, without the language we have in 2015. In today's terms, does Carol think Lydia would describe herself as queer in some way? "I always do this thing. I'll look at say, Kenneth [Lydia's brother, played by Joe Cole], and think, where is he now? I think he runs a record shop in Brighton. And I think Lydia definitely lives with her girlfriend somewhere."

As a filmmaker, does she worry that overplaying a sapphic theme might narrow the audience? "I'm presenting the films how I see my life," Carol says. "Sexuality isn't the foremost thing. It's just like, here is my world. Here it is. [I'd] hate to think anyone would make a film [and] felt they had to scale it down. I've never had to do that, but you wonder about the bigger films, like *Pride*. In order to reach that broader audience, did they have things they had to do?"

Back to the film, and the chemistry between Lydia and Abbie, which is so palpable it's impossible to ignore. Was that something that was directed, I ask. "We did what you call chemistry testing," Carol tells me. "Because they had to have something, and you can't over manufacture that. They really got on very instantaneously and you needed that. They're really amazing friends now, they really bonded. All the girls are good friends. I made a girl gang that are still friends today!"

Speaking of girl gangs, one thing I really loved about the film was the way it avoided clichés about adolescent girls being bitchy or nasty to each other. Says Carol: "I think female

friendship is incredibly complicated. When you look back at growing up, which is very painful, while you do fall out with people, when you see bitchy, one-dimensional cat fights... I think it's much more complex, and there's much more to explore. [Some] films are so tedious. Or it becomes very 'victim-y'. I really wanted to get away from that and explore different characters that are all friends, that all influence each other. I always love when you see a film with dynamic female characters that isn't a cliché about female friendship."

Indeed, Lydia, Abbie and the other women in the film – especially Lydia's mother Eileen, played by the fantastic Maxine Peake – are incredibly dynamic, and it seems to be that often the strongest female characters in TV and film come in institutions like all girl schools or prison, away from men. Is that the only way we can really explore female relationships?

"I do wonder," Carol says wistfully. She goes on: "[In film], the male takes the leading role and drives the narrative forward, and the women in those films are secondary. You get a film like *Thelma and Louise*, but then the only option was to drive off a cliff. It was a great film, it was an exciting film at the time, because you were seeing two women actively drive the narrative forward. When you look at [the fact] 7% of women or less direct films and even less write films, you're going to get the preoccupation being the male leading the story. [But] when you just make a film with the guy leading the narrative, the straight white guy or whoever, you're actually denying a whole lot of representation being available to everyone."

In contrast, *The Falling* was made with a large female crew, something which is sadly still very rare in cinema. So is it a feminist film? "Absolutely," Carol says, unequivocally. "But I didn't have an agenda. It was just organic. I can't imagine someone saying they're not a feminist, you see."

In the film, Carol says she was keen to tell a different story about life in Britain in 1969, away from the "swinging 60s" narrative we often see depicted. "It was probably about 600 people who participated in that," she says. "At a girls' grammar school in the 1960s, you're going to find it's a very repressed time. It was important to look at that repression. Even when I was at school,

sexuality was a very taboo subject. Obviously, it's gone on from time immemorial that women love women, but I don't think in the late 60s – while there would have been areas where there was a liberal aspect – you would find it in a girl's grammar school. Although it would have been going on."

Much of Carol's previous work has been autobiographical in some way. Is there any of her in this? She pauses for a minute. "You know, it's weird," she says. "I never deliberately did that, but then you kind of think... maybe all films become personal, especially if you write them." What about the characters? Is she in there? "Lydia is Lydia, Abbie is Abbie, and they're probably all to some extent based on people I've known. You realise you draw from your own world."

She continues: "Since making *The Alcohol Years*, I've been interested in how you're perceived, especially as a young woman. In *The Falling*, Lydia says [to the psychiatrist], 'We are all three people. The person other people see, the person we think we are and the person we really are.' I was fascinated with teenage identity because it is a point where you're finding out who you are and exploring and working against the dominant morality of the time or the anxieties around what you're going to be at that time."

What does she hope audiences will take away from the film? "I hope they bring something to the film rather than take something away. I hope they can bring themselves to it and identify with it and it reaches people and they think about their own school days. They think about their relationships with their mothers or their parents, or they think about their friendships. I hope it evokes memories and also I hope to a large extent as well it's a celebratory film. Although it goes into the dark side, it is – in a weird way – celebrating collectivity and for me, ultimately, it becomes about a mother connecting with her daughter again."

With that in mind, how will Eileen feel in 10 or 20 years when Lydia does finally come out? "People of Eileen's generation, they had to come round by the 80s, didn't they?" laughs Carol. "So she would have been happy when Lydia came out. Well... she would have accepted it, anyway. She wouldn't have disowned her!" **D**

The Falling is released on 24 April.

"It is a feminist film. But I didn't have an agenda. It was just organic"



Who's that girl?

*For where is any author in the world.
Teaches such beauty as a woman's eye?
[Shakespeare, Love's Labour's Lost, Act IV, scene 3]*

They say beauty is in the eye of the beholder and while there is evidence that perceptions of beauty are evolutionarily determined – that humans might be attracted to mates that are likely to offer them enhanced chances of survival – the experience of beauty nevertheless remains subjective.

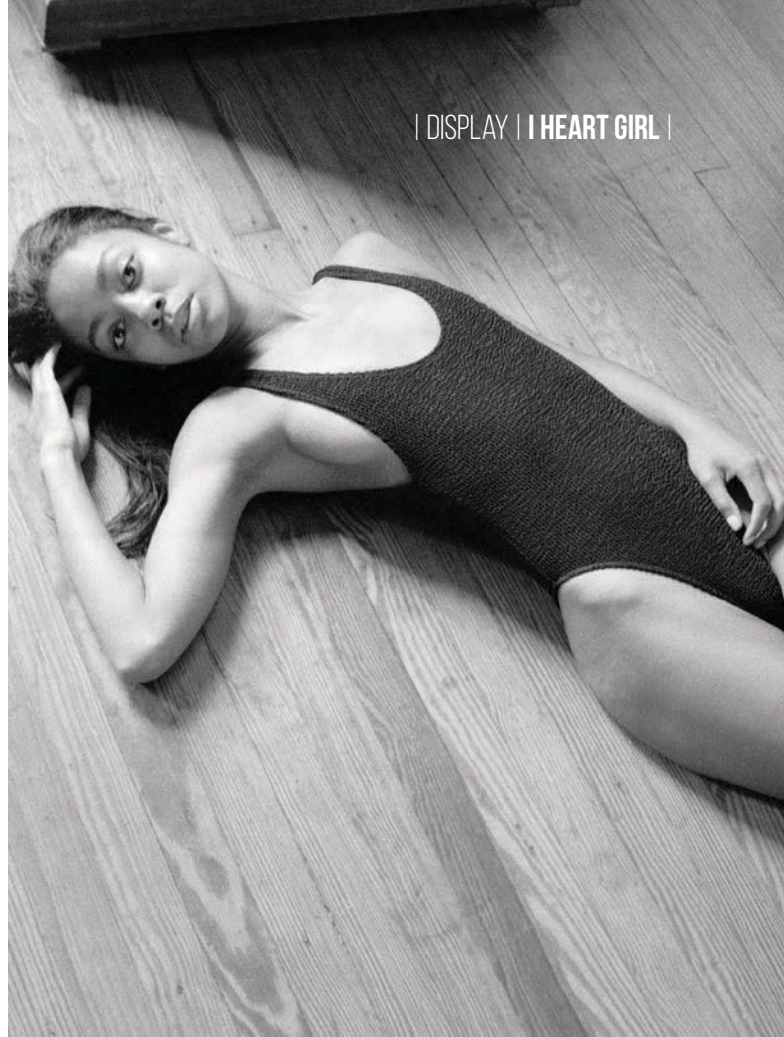
In her first monograph, *I Heart Boy*, which launched her career in 2010, photographer Jessica Yatrosky laid bare what some have referred to as the “gay” ideal of male beauty, stripped down to the essence, with hairless bodies and a youthful androgyny, reflected in her choice of the word “boy” not “man”. In her latest

**A NEW BOOK
UNPICKS THE
MEANING
OF THE
WORD GIRL**
WORDS ANNA MCNAY

counterpart, *I Heart Girl*, she turns to female beauty. Across 96 pages, she lays out photographs of naked – and near naked – young women, all of whom, in some way or other, are beautiful, all of whom are sexy and innocently alluring. None conforms to the classical definition of symmetry and aesthetic perfection, many almost boyish with their slender figures, but each allows her inner beauty to shine through. As George Pitts notes in the introduction, femininity is teased out of androgyny, with each subject's self-awareness and quiet confidence – true characteristics of survival – capturing the essence of this “fairer” sex. **📖**

I Heart Girl by Jessica Yatrosky, Published by PowerHouse Books, May 2015





| DISPLAY | I HEART GIRL |





Tongue and groove:
Emma Gilmour gets technical

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

In September 2012, I was involved in the Liverpool art scene as a photographer and co-running a studio of 14 artists. I was also totally disillusioned by it. Over the course of three years I'd had a key role in organising shows and the studio had hosted many successful events. Eventually the art scene imploded; rising rents, infighting and rivalry were rife. Everything stopped being fun and nobody was making money.

On a whim, I decided to retrain. As Lila says in *Better Than Chocolate*, "There's no future in the arts" (not totally true!); what could I do? Keep working for beer or retrain and actually make some money? I already had degrees in media and an IT course was the most sensible option... so of course I signed up to a construction diploma.

Within a week, I was in a draughty workshop with 16 other women of

EMMA GILMOUR FOUND SOLIDARITY AND LEARNED NEW SKILLS WHEN SHE TOOK A COURSE IN CONSTRUCTION FOR WOMEN

varying ages and backgrounds. I'd been responsible for the maintenance of the art studio but the bulk of my construction experience came from watching *Property Ladder*. To make matters worse, I'm pretty introverted; suddenly I was confronted with my idea of hell, a roomful of talkative strangers. The first day is a blur but I remember the feeling of belonging, even at that stage, and the sense of accomplishment at the end of the day. Learning in an all-female environment was an entirely new experience and a far cry from the largely male-dominated art scene I had been immersed in.

The media like to believe that if you put a group of women together, it devolves into cat fights and bitching. What isn't often shown is the laughter, immaturity and hilarity, and how strong a group of women can be. Training in a single-sex environment

isn't a feminist utopia but it is by far the most supportive and encouraging learning experience I've had. Without the intervention of any male figure, the self-policing that women do around men was removed, replaced instead with the freedom to learn and improve for your own needs and on your own terms.

On paper, our group shouldn't gel: ranging in age from 16-60+, working and middle class, some with no qualifications and others with degrees, different ethnicities and nationalities; perhaps surprisingly, I was the only LGBT student. I initially worried about working closely with a group of straight women. It was a short-lived fear, I was effectively outed on day one when the topic of spouses came up and I mentioned my "partner", which was immediately followed by, "Your female partner?". God bless outspoken

Scouse women. Nobody, across the two groups I trained with, was homophobic; they ask after my partner and invite her on nights out. It's easy to sell people short but my experience has been positive. We shared a common drive to learn and that was the foundation for our friendships.

During the first year we learned tiling, plastering/rendering, decorating and bricklaying. We covered legislation with long and ludicrous acronyms; HASAWA (Health and Safety at Work Act) COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) and RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations).

Eventually our numbers dropped to five and we formed a tight-knit unit, signing up for the second year together where joinery was the core focus. We were joined by seven other women and a different tutor who was incredibly talented. She had the unique ability to make us believe there was nothing we couldn't achieve but she was as immature and fun as us. We laughed every day in the workshop, which by now was a second home, but we also worked our asses off, literally. You learn quickly that construction works muscles you didn't know existed. That's part of what makes a course like this so good, the definite feeling of having worked that feels different to sitting at a desk all day. You see progression and achievement and that dull ache lets you know you really did something.

The nature of construction means it's more perceived as a male career and there are men in the trades still threatened by a woman on site in a "non-traditional" role. When we were invited to work on a trade show as-

sisting kitchen-fitters, we had a good time and most companies told our tutor they wouldn't hesitate in hiring women if we were the example, but one company refused to work with us. They were rude and defensive, insisting they didn't need help. Later they asked if we could spare anyone because they risked missing the finish deadline. Unfortunately, their attitude and the fact we had to leave meant we had neither the time nor inclination.

The course culminated in a CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) test and work placements. I stayed at the workshop as my interest is making/restoring furniture. My tutor gave me one of her commissions; building an altar for a local Catholic church. It may sound like a moral conflict but the chance to design an altar, disassemble pitch pine pews and repurpose them was too good to refuse. The pews were 100 years old and made to last indefinitely. Another thing I learned; Victorian joiners didn't mess around. The altar will last just as long and the congregation love it. I'll always be grateful to my tutor for that opportunity because now, no matter where I am, I have a legacy in Liverpool and she trusted me to do it justice.

Construction has made me more comfortable with myself; having grown up working class in an Irish town, moving to Northern Ireland for grammar school and then to an English university, I didn't realise how displaced I felt until there were no class expectations. I was equally surprised to find how much I enjoyed training with women, something I had avoided for years due to the discomfort of my straight Christian friends in my teens.

It's surprisingly good therapy,

which I discovered when volunteering as technician for a training day for domestic violence survivors. Twelve anxious women arrived at the workshop but over the following hours they learned basic skills such as using tools and putting up shelves in teams. The workshop became noisier and more joyous as they helped each other overcome challenges. By the end of the day, every one of them had tried the chop saw, a beast of a machine that they all insisted they'd be too afraid to use. They cheered and applauded each other and in just one day, were already more confident.

I have made friends that I would never have met if I hadn't taken the risk of signing up to construction. Nine of us are still close; the original five, three from second year and our ever-supportive technician who put up with us the whole time. When we meet it invariably devolves into raucous laughter. I'm more outgoing now than I ever have been. I've laughed and worked harder than any other time in my life and that is thanks to pursuing a "non-traditional" course in an all-female environment.

Women are still woefully under-represented in construction and this was sadly evident when our tutor left after we graduated; the college had to hire a male tutor and I doubt the current class will have the same camaraderie we had. We need more female learning spaces because it gives us the strength to go into male dominated environments and be as great as we can be. Women of all backgrounds have been in construction for a lot longer than people realise, but now it's time for more of us to stand up and be seen. **Q**

You learn quickly that construction works muscles you didn't know existed



KICKING HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA OUT OF CONSTRUCTION

Property and infrastructure group Lend Lease has embraced Stonewall's Rainbow Laces campaign, which aims to kick homophobia out of sport, and reinterpreted it with thousands of builders at Lend Lease sites. Workers based at sites around London have donned Stonewall's Rainbow Laces together to kick homophobia, biphobia and transphobia out of their industry.

"We know that LGBT people still face

challenges working in the construction industry," says Chris Edwards of Stonewall. "That's why initiatives like this – and the work of senior role models and allies at Lend Lease and across the sector – are absolutely vital. We're committed to working with organisations in the construction sector to help make the industry open and welcoming to all."

stonewall.org.uk

“Why I’ll Be Voting Labour – and Why You Should Too”



The past five years have been shit, haven't they? I know the Tories are trying to make us drink the Kool Aid that convinces us we are all better off since they've been in power – but it seems like the jug ran out of juice before it got to me.

I regularly campaign and doorstep for Labour, and I often ask a very simple question: “Are you better off now than you were five years ago?” The answer is, unsurprisingly, no. This is in part due to the fact I’m knocking on the doors of average people, not bonus-laden bankers or Bullingdon Club bullies. Take, for example, the woman who answered her door wearing four jumpers and a scarf, because she couldn’t afford to put the heating on. Or the elderly man heading out to do his Saturday shopping who explained to me he had to choose

AT THE BALLOT BOX THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO GO, SAYS LABOUR PARTY MEMBER AMY LAMÉ

between butter or flour this week – his budget wouldn't stretch to both. If the Tories say we're all better off, then it must be true, right?

Reality is a stark contrast from force-fed government lies. In London alone, food bank usage is up 400% in the past two years. This is according to the Trussel Trust who run over 420 food banks across the country and fed 913,138 people nationwide last year, including 330,205 who were children. Yet the Trussel Trust was accused by Iain Duncan Smith of “scaremongering”. Most people accessing food banks have low-paid jobs, and can't make ends meet before the next paycheck. As ever, Michael Gove showed his sensitive, caring side by claiming that food bank users were “not able to manage their finances”.

Yet, according to the Tories, unemployment is at an all-time low. Scratch beneath the veneer of this claim, and

you'll find youth unemployment is a shocking 16.5%. Zero hours contract jobs – with no guarantee of shifts or benefits – account for 1.8 million employees in the UK. If you are lucky enough to have a job, and a secure one at that, don't think you are necessarily able to pay your bills. Wages have suffered a severe decline in real terms, with the average employee £2,000 worse off since 2008.

It is the poor, the vulnerable, the young and the disabled who have suffered most under the Tory-led coalition government. Cuts to legal aid, Sure Start centres and the Arts Council. Educational Maintenance Allowance and Remploy abolished. Slashed budgets for youth centres and social care. A sharp decline in numbers of police, nurses and libraries. Some may call it austerity. Others may say it's a coincidence. To me, it is out and out ideological warfare.

The devastation wreaked by the

Tory-led coalition is downright inhumane. And all the cuts disproportionately affect women. Are we surprised, coming from a PM who is happy to tell a female colleague to "Calm down, dear"? It's time to break up Cameron's cronyism club for the boys. The Tories will try to make their campaign more appealing to female voters the closer we get to the election. After all, we are 52% of the electorate, and according to a recent poll conducted for Radio

councils for recycling.

Not in one other constituency up and down the country is there a serious Green contender in a seat they have a chance of winning. The Green leader, Natalie Bennett, is standing in my constituency, a very safe Labour seat. She won't even make a dent in the majority. If even the party leader is standing in a seat she can't – and won't

make LGBT equality part of their manifesto pledge in 1997. From the moment Labour stepped into office, punitive and abhorrent laws were got rid of –

Section 28 abolished, age of consent equalised – and gay men and lesbians allowed to serve openly in the military, adoption rights enabled,



Out and about: Labour supporter Amy Lamé spreads the word

4's Woman's Hour, 35% of us haven't decided yet who we will vote for. Well, I have. And I hope I can persuade you to vote Labour, like I will, on 7 May.

But the Tories aren't Labour's only challenge. There are the Greens as well, who have benefited from a recent high-profile membership boost. Poverty campaigner and celebrity chef Jack Monroe publicly quit the Labour Party for the Greens. Obviously I disagree with her decision and it's not that I think all Green policies are bad. It's just that there's a bigger chance of Putin marching down the aisle of Westminster Abbey to marry Prince Harry than there is of the Greens getting any real power. The only Green MP, Caroline Lucas, has a very slim majority of 1,252 in her Brighton Pavilion seat. The council is Green-controlled, too. Yet my friends who live in Brighton complain that they can't get their bins emptied, graffiti (not of the artistic kind) is taking over the city and Brighton council infamously ranks 302nd out of 326

Women are 52% of the electorate and 35% of us haven't decided yet who we will vote for

– win, what are the Greens saying? And what, exactly will Greens be voting for? A political party with no power is an ideology with little ability to effect change. We've got to be practical and not just protest, especially when the election is predicted to be so close.

In a recent poll conducted by this magazine, almost 30 percent of you said you plan on voting Green in the General Election. I know this may be uncomfortable for many DIVA readers, but a vote for the Greens is really a vote for the Tories – especially in any area of the country where the Greens stand no chance of being elected. Which is pretty much everywhere.

If we prevent the Tories from getting back in and there is no overall majority, Labour will have to enter into informal coalition agreements with the SNP and the Greens. Surely this is the most effective way for the Greens to influence policy – from the inside.

While I'm at it, can I do some memory checks? It's too easy to forget that Labour is the only party that has consistently shown its dedication to LGBT equality. It was the first party to

fertility rights granted for lesbians, immigration and asylum rights extended, civil partnership enacted, and more. Let's not forget the Labour cross-bench support for equal marriage – which, incidentally, would not have passed without our support in the Lords and Commons.

Labour is the only party that is actively pro-women and has the record to prove it. We may laugh at the now infamous Pink Bus, but what other party is going across the country talking to women about what we want and need from our MPs? Labour is the only party to have all-women selection shortlists – out of 650 MPs, only 148 are women. Eighty-six are Labour – more than every other party's put together. On 8 May, we hope to have more female MPs than ever – 42% – not so far off the goal of parity.

I hope you'll join me and vote Labour on Polling Day. And if the Tories get back in, don't say I didn't warn you. **D**

How will you be voting? Take part in our survey at tinyurl.com/DIVAelection
Find out why Jack Monroe will be voting Green at divamag.co.uk

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THINGS

YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

LESBIAN SEX

HAVING TRAWLED A DOZEN STUDIES PUBLISHED WITHIN THE LAST 10 YEARS (YOU'RE WELCOME), DIVA PRESENTS THE LEZ/BI FACTS OF LIFE

THE MEDIAN AGE OF
**FIRST SEXUAL
EXPERIENCE**
WITH ANOTHER WOMAN:

21

(FROM SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF LESBIANS AND BISEXUAL WOMEN, JV BAILEY, C FARQUAR, C OWEN, D WHITTAKER, 2002)

**LABELS ARE
FOR CLOTHES,
NOT PEOPLE**

1%

of heterosexual women reported sometimes having sex with women

5%

of lesbians reported sometimes having sex with men

10%

of bisexual women were currently having sex only or mainly with women

19%

of lesbians reported also being attracted to men

10%

of straight women reported sexual attraction to women

9%

of heterosexual women have no attraction to anyone

(FROM SEXUAL ORIENTATION EXPLORED: A STUDY OF IDENTITY, ATTRACTION, BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES IN 2009 A YOUNGVOY SURVEY FOR THE EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION)

EVERYONE'S AT IT (WELL NEARLY)

It's estimated that at least

4.9% of women aged 16-44 in Britain

have had one or more female sexual partners at some point in their lives. Rising to

6.9% in Greater London

(An equivalent for the US is 4.1% for women aged 18-59 with 6.2% in the USA's largest cities.)

(FROM SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF LESBIANS AND BISEXUAL WOMEN, JV BAILEY, C FARQUAR, C OWEN, D WHITTAKER, 2002)



ATTRACTION, AGE, AND IDENTITY



Queer women in monogamous relationships have almost exactly the same amount of sex as polyamorous people.

GENDER LABELS DON'T DICTATE THE KIND OF SEX WE LIKE

Self-identified butches like being penetrated by toys just as much as self-identified femmes.

Those who identified as neither butch nor femme like being penetrated less than either self-identified butches or femmes.

There were no significant differences on attraction to going down on women by lesbian gender label.

(FROM BUTCH BOTTOM-FEMME TOP? AN EXPLORATION OF LESBIAN STEREOTYPES, BY DR JA'NINA WALKER, UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO, 2005.)

8 LGBT PEOPLE THINK IS BETTER THAN SEX

THINGS

(FROM THE "I EXIST" SURVEY OF LGB PEOPLE LIVING IN THE UK, LESBIAN & GAY FOUNDATION, 2012)

ACCEPTANCE 36%

BEING MYSELF/ BEING FREE 34%

LEGAL PROTECTION 18%

LGBT COMMUNITY 11%

NOT CONFORMING/HAVING A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE 9%

LOVE AND/OR SEX 9%

LGBT SERVICES AND SUPPORT 6%

SOCIAL LIFE 5%

SEX DOESN'T STOP...

59% of lesbian and bi women in their 60s were in an intimate (emotional and physical) relationship.

33% of over-80s had a partner.

(FROM THE LIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF LESBIANS OVER 60 IN THE UK, BY JANE TRAIES, UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX, 2014)

...BUT IT MAY CHANGE AS WE AGE

A study carried out in San Francisco in 2005 found that

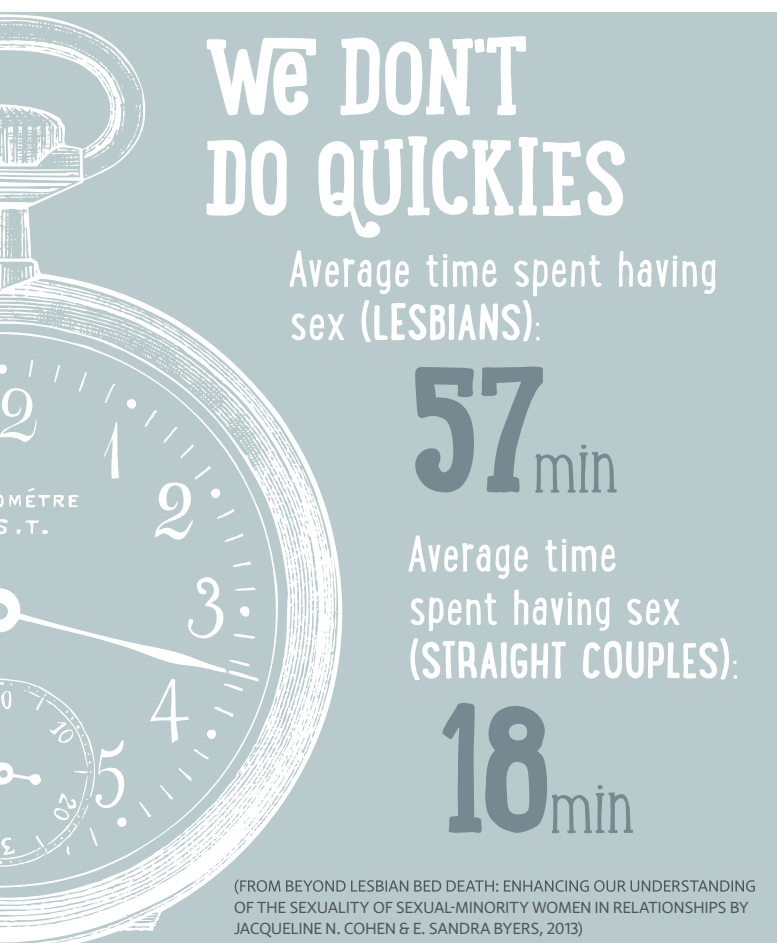
- Older lesbians were less attracted to "giving" behaviours (eg going down)
- All women liked receiving to an equal degree, no matter what their age
- Older lesbians are less attracted to penetration with toys, whether giving or receiving.

(FROM BUTCH BOTTOM-FEMME TOP? AN EXPLORATION OF LESBIAN STEREOTYPES, BY DR JA'NINA WALKER, UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO, 2005.)



(FROM SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF LESBIANS AND BISEXUAL WOMEN, JV BAILEY, C FARQUAR, C OWEN, D WHITTAKER, 2002)

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THINGS
YOU SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT
LESBIAN SEX



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THE WHOLE LESBIAN SEX BOOK:
A Passionate Guide For All of Us
BY FELICE NEWMAN
(CLEIS PRESS)

LESBIAN SEX 101:
101 Lovemaking Positions
BY JUDE SCHELL
(CELESTIAL ARTS)

GIRL SEX 101
BY ALLISON MOON
(GIRLSEX101.COM)

BOOKS
HUNDRED OF POSITIONS

BLOODY LOVELY

QUEER WOMEN WHO HAVE SEX SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK ARE MORE LIKELY TO ENJOY PERIOD SEX.

(FROM AUTOSTRADDE.COM)



3 LEZ/BI-FRIENDLY PLACES TO PLAY

CLUB LASH, MANCHESTER

Next event 9 May.
10pm-4am. Mixed
[FACEBOOK.COM/CLUBLASH](https://www.facebook.com/clublash)

SWEAT SAUNA, LONDON

Events bi-monthly.
Women + trans
[SWEAT-LONDON.CO.UK](https://www.sweat-london.co.uk)

KINKFEST, WEST MIDLANDS

Next event 25-26 July.
Mixed
[KINKFESTUK.COM](https://www.kinkfestuk.com)

FIND FULL LISTINGS AT [FETLIFE.COM](https://www.fetlife.com)

THERE'S A NEW SEX TOY THAT SQUIRTS

The Semenette claims to be "even better than the real thing", so DIVA set out to put that to the test.

The evening began with a surreal conversation about which liquid to use (wine? Shower gel?) and after a lot of consideration, we decided a mixture of water and lube was probably safest.

Putting it together was easy enough, though it did little to get us in the mood.

While the experience was fun, I'd be reluctant to try conceiving without a lot more practice as, when it came to the moment of

truth, we were a little underwhelmed.

"Did you feel that?" I asked my wife.

The answer was no. I pulled out, thinking it wasn't working, but when I squeezed the device again I managed to cover my wife, the bedsheets and myself in our fake baby batter. Hilarious? Yes. Sexy? Not so much.

FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH THE SEMENETTE'S CREATOR SEE P26

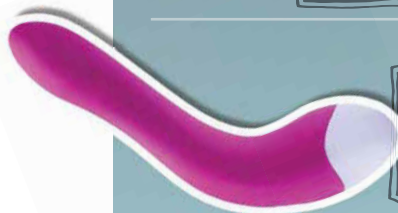
5 BEST-SELLING SEX TOYS AT SH!

([sh-womenstore.com](https://www.sh-womenstore.com))

1 Best strap-on kit (£99)



2 Sh! Desire vibrator (£49)



3 Lush lube (£10)



4 Corset strap-on harness (£62)



5 Sh! Mini G-Spot vibrator (£18)



SEX TOYS

ONE LESS THING **TO WORRY ABOUT**

Delay Your Period

safe and effective treatment online

HealthExpress offers effective prescription treatment that can safely help you delay your period for up to 14 days. This means you can enjoy any occasion.

To find out more visit HealthExpress.co.uk



No appointment needed



Free prescription



Free next day delivery

healthexpress.co.uk

☎ 020 7084 7594

DIRTY GIRLS!

Of those who reported sharing sex toys with female partners.

22% never washed them before sharing.

31% washed them occasionally and

47% always washed them.

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THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LESBIAN SEX

THEY CAN'T
BE LICKED!
Oh wait...



(FROM SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR OF LESBIANS AND BISEXUAL WOMEN, JV BAILEY, C FARQUAR, C OWEN, D WHITTAKER, 2002)



Pasante supply condoms and dental dams to the NHS. The flavoured dams are made of natural rubber latex from sustainable plantations. A non-latex version is also available for allergy-suffers.

LESS THAN HALF OF LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL WOMEN HAVE EVER BEEN SCREENED FOR SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS.

HALF of those who have been screened had an STI. **A QUARTER** of those with STIs have only had sex with women in the last five years. **THREE QUARTERS** of those who have not been tested "don't think I'm at risk". **ONE IN 10** have not been tested because they are "too scared". Others reported that as they had no symptoms, they assumed they were fine. **FOUR PER CENT** have been told by healthcare workers that they do not need a test.

(SAFER SEX: DO WE REALLY NEED TO? FIND OUT ON P52)

(FROM PRESCRIPTION FOR CHANGE - LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL WOMEN'S HEALTH CHECK 2008, BY RUTH HUNT AND DR JULIE FISH, STONEWALL AND DE MONFORT UNIVERSITY, LEICESTER)

A Taiwanese company has launched the Findom, a six-centimetre condom designed to slip over the fingers. The Findom, said to be popular with lesbians, sold 1.25 million units last year.



DOWN UNDER

According to an Australian study.

9.7% of queer women use dental dams during oral sex and

2.1% do so regularly.

(FROM DO WOMEN USE DENTAL DAMS? SAFER SEX PRACTICES OF LESBIANS AND OTHER WOMEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH WOMEN, JULIET RICHTERS A D, GARRETT PRESTAGE B, KAREN SCHNEIDER B, STEVIE CLAYTON C, 2010)

5 ORGANISATIONS OFFERING LESBIAN SEX ADVICE

No matter where you are, help is at hand. Pink Therapy has a nationwide LGBT therapist directory. Manchester's LGBT Foundation works with those in the Greater Manchester area and many of the London organisations offer online. Skype and telephone counselling for those living outside Greater London.

PINKTHERAPY.COM

LGBT.FOUNDATION

LONDONSEXRELATIONSHIP THERAPY.COM

LONDONFRIEND.ORG.UK

PACEHEALTH.ORG.UK

Men Overboard.



The Florida Keys
Key West

Close To Perfect - Far From Normal

Actually, between the warm water, endless sunshine and incredible variety of things to eat, drink and do, it's quite easy for everyone to go a little overboard in Key West.

fla-keys.com/gaykeywest

0208 686 2600



Beauty & the Beach...

PROVINCETOWN

ptown.org



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THINGS

YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

LESBIAN SEX



4

SMOKIN' PASSAGES

FROM LESBIAN LITERATURE

And that night they were not divided.

THE WELL OF LONELINESS BY RADCLYFFE HALL (FIRST PUBLISHED 1928).

The weight on my back meant the finger was not giving up. The furious finger stabbed and stabbed. A maddening eel was dancing with death against my insides. My eyes were listening, my ears seeing: Isabelle was infecting me with her brutality. Let the finger right through the town, let it rupture the abatoirs. The burning was hurting me, our limitations hurt even more. But the dogged finger awakened my flesh; but the blows made me keener. My intoxication was layered in thick brush-strokes, in a warbling of spices. I opened myself up to the hips.

THERESE & ISABELLE BY VIOLETTE LEDUC, TRANS SOPHIE LEWIS (FIRST PUBLISHED 1966)

Memory moved her hand to Mamie Carter's belly – skin white as milk, finely puckled like sugar-sprinkled clabber: memory dropped her hand to Mamie Carter's sparse hair curling like steel – there was strength between her legs and no dough where the flesh was fluid enough to slip away from the bone and leave that tensed grain hard as granite and her upright violent part like an animal nose against Su's palm. The impact of the memory bruised. Su said, to the back that could not hear, "Don't you dare die, Mamie Carter Wilkerson."

SISTER GIN BY JUNE ARNOLD (FIRST PUBLISHED 1975).

We bought red delicious pippins, the size of french cashew apples. There were green plantains, which we half peeled and then planted, fruit-deep, in each other's bodies until the petals of skin lay like tendrils of broad green fire upon the curly darkness between our upspread thighs. *There were ripe red finger bananas, stubby and sweet, with which I parted your lips gently, to insert the peeled fruit into your grape-purple flower. I held you, lay between your brown legs, slowly playing my tongue through your familiar forests, slowly licking and swallowing as the deep undulations and tidal motions of your strong body slowly mashed ripe banana into a beige cream that mixed with the juices of your electric flesh. Our bodies met again, each surface touched with each other's flame, from the tips of our curled toes to our tongues, and locked into our own wild rhythms, we rode each other across the thundering space, dripped like the light from the peak of each other's tongue.* We were each of us both together. Then we were apart, and sweat sheened our bodies like sweet oil.

ZAMI: A NEW SPELLING OF MY NAME BY AUDRE LORDE (FIRST PUBLISHED 1982)

ORANGE IS THE NEW SEX

TOTAL AMOUNT OF TIME CHARACTERS IN ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK SPEND HAVING SEX:

1

Whether with fiancée Larry or partner-in-crime Alex, Piper Chapman is getting more than anyone else in Litchfield, racking up nine sexy scenes.

2

In second place, Alex Vause, who had a total of seven sex scenes across seasons one and two.

3

Dalliances with Morello, Soso, Vause and a few other inmates take Nicky Nichols into third, with six sex scenes.



Honourary mention: Big Boo and the screwdriver.



SAFER SEX:

DO WE REALLY NEED TO?

"I DON'T HAVE SEX WITH MEN; I DON'T THINK I'M AT RISK."

While penetration with a penis is a more effective mode of transmission for many sexually transmitted infections (STIs), sex between women is not without its risks. It may be harder for a woman to pass an STI to a female partner, but it is far from unknown; a study by Stonewall (2008) showed that while less than half of lesbian/bi women have been screened for STIs, half of those screened had an STI and a quarter of them had only had sex with women in the previous five years.

Some STIs, such as genital herpes,

WE'VE ALL HEARD ABOUT CONDOMS BUT WHAT IS SAFER SEX WHEN IT'S BETWEEN TWO WOMEN? HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WORDS LOUISE CAROLIN

are just as easily transmitted between women as between men and women, and very common too, so it is worth understanding the risk factors and how to avoid infection. The fact that women who have sex with women are less likely to think of themselves as vulnerable to infection (and may not know how to make safer sex protocols part of their sex lives) increases our risk factor. So, it is important to be as well-informed as possible, so that you can make the best choice for yourself and your partner/s.

Safer sex protocols are the measures you (or you and your sex

partner/s) may adopt to reduce the likelihood of anybody picking up an STI. If you are single and dating you can decide which safer sex protocols make sense to you as an individual, depending on who you have sex with and the kind of sex you have. If you are in a relationship (or more than one), you will need to talk to your partner/s about the protocols you want to make part of your sex lives.

"WHAT IS THE POINT OF SAFER SEX?"

Any STI can be passed from one woman to another during sex, depend-

ing on what sexual activity you are enjoying. Some STIs are more infectious than others and some sexual activities are safer than others. If you know that you or your partner has a particular STI, you might take suitable measures to avoid passing it between you. If you are having sex with someone whose health status you don't know, it makes sense to assume that they may be infectious – and use suitable protocols to avoid picking anything up.

"WHAT COULD I CATCH FROM HAVING SEX WITH WOMEN?"

STIs include chlamydia, genital herpes, genital warts, gonorrhoea, HIV, syphilis, trichomonas vaginalis (trich), pubic lice (crabs) and scabies. It is also possible to catch a vaginal yeast infection (thrush) and bacterial vaginosis (BV) from a female sex partner, so if you develop either, you should be careful not to pass it on to anyone you are having sex with.

"HOW WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE AN STI AND WHAT SHOULD I DO?"

For information about the symptoms and treatment of common STIs, visit nhs.uk/conditions/sexually-transmitted-infections/pages/introduction.aspx. If you think you may have an infection, visit your GP or GUM clinic for a proper diagnosis, treatment and advice. Most STIs are easily treated with antibiotics. Only HIV and genital herpes are not curable but they can both be controlled with the right treatment.

Think about who you have had sex with. Who might have passed the infection on to you? Who might you have passed it on to? Consider letting these people know about your diagnosis so that they can seek treatment and not infect anyone else.

You may not feel like having sex again until you are in the clear, but if you have an incurable STI such as genital herpes, you will need to learn how to carry on enjoying your sex life without putting partners at risk of infection from you. There is good information for lesbians with herpes or cold sores here: goaskalice.columbia.edu/herpes-info-lesbians.

Women who have sex with women are less likely to think of themselves as at risk of infection

DO I NEED A SEXUAL HEALTH CHECK EVEN IF I DON'T HAVE SYMPTOMS?

Not all STIs result in any noticeable symptoms so you could be infected (and infectious) without knowing it. Chlamydia is a very common STI that may not create symptoms and can cause serious damage to your reproductive organs, which can lead to infertility if not diagnosed, treated and cured. If you are having sex, it is a good idea to have a regular check up. You can ask your GP/practice nurse to run a test for STIs when you go for your cervical screening, or visit your local GUM clinic. The test involves a swab (you may be asked to do this yourself at the clinic) to collect a sample from inside your vagina. The sample is sent to a lab for testing and you will be notified of the result.

"HOW CAN I AVOID CATCHING AN STI?"

With the exception of scabies, which can infest bedclothes, you cannot catch STIs without coming into very close genital contact with an infected person. So, cuddling, frottage (dry humping), kissing, talking dirty, massage, breast play and masturbation (touching yourself) are all very low risk.

However, there is still a risk of transmission whenever body fluids are passed between partners. These include vaginal fluid, blood (including menstrual blood), breast milk and anal mucus.

ORAL SEX

Oral sex is considered low risk for the transmission of STIs but common infections including chlamydia, gonorrhoea, herpes and HPV (the virus that causes genital warts and some cervical cancers) can be transferred by oral sex. If your partner has HIV or hepatitis, going down on her during her period increases the risk of transmission.

If you do not know your partner's health status (or your own), you may decide to avoid oral sex, or use a barrier to reduce the risk of transmission. Dental dams are thin, stretchy

squares of latex that you hold over your partner's vulva/anus while you go down on her. (As an alternative, you can use a condom – just snip off the tip with scissors and slit up the side so you can open it out into a square.) When using a barrier for oral sex, take care to remember which side is hers and which side is yours; do not re-use or swap between partners.

MASTURBATION/ FINGERING

Touching your partner's vulva and clitoris with your hands/fingers and fingering (penetrating her vagina) is low risk but there are some important factors to bear in mind. First, remember to wash your hands! Second, if you do not know your partner's health status and have open cuts or sores on your hands/fingers, consider using a barrier such as a latex glove, to prevent transmission. Third, try not to touch yourself with the same hand you just used on her; keep one hand for her and one hand for yourself to avoid sharing fluids. Be careful not to touch her vagina if you have just touched her anus (or anyone else's), wash your hands first.


FISTING

For fisting (penetrating your partner with your whole hand) it is a good idea to use plenty of lube and wear latex gloves in order to protect the inside of the vagina/anus from small tears/cuts.

TOYS

If you are sharing toys such as dildos or vibrators, wash them between users or cover with a condom. Always clean toys with hot water and soap after sex.

PEOPLE WITH PENISES

While there's a lot more information out there for people who have sex with men (both women or gay/bi men), it's worth a reminder that having sex with someone who has a penis can result in pregnancy, besides the STIs mentioned. Remember to use a condom! 

What do you think? Drop us a line at letters@divamag.co.uk.

FURTHER READING

For loads of information about sex with women, including safer sex, DIVA recommends the LGBT Foundation's booklet, **BEATING ABOUT THE BUSH**. Download it here: lgbt.foundation/get-support/lgbt-hearts-girls/we-heart-sex.

Amazing enough to be let in

Say you had a list, and on that list you wrote down everything you'd want in a prospective partner. Maybe you'd put down things like "must have a mutual attraction", or the classic "good sense of humour". Maybe you'd be looking for someone confident, or with a great smile. Perhaps it's got to be something casual at first, because you know how hot this fire can burn, or maybe you want to dive right in, discovering everything about this new person in a rich and glorious storm of emotion.

Most, if not all of us have made these lists, and you could argue that they're an essential part of finding the right person. If you know what you want from a relationship then it should make it easier to find one, right?

Now, suppose you meet someone. Suppose they tick most, or even all of those boxes, and you're excited and happy, and then they tell you, "I'm trans".

What's the first thing that goes through your head?

Maybe that's an unfair question. Perhaps you're feeling put on the spot. Maybe you'll think to yourself, I don't have a problem with it. Maybe though,

BISEXUAL
TRANS
WOMAN
FREIYA
BENSON
REVEALS HER
EXPERIENCES
DATING CIS
LESBIANS

The stigma
attached
to trans
people runs
deep in our
society

you might also be thinking these things...

If I'm attracted to a trans woman what does that make me?

What will my friends think?

This is really complicated.

I don't think I "do" trans.

How will we have sex?

So maybe you'll ask your friends, because you're not sure, and this is new territory for you, and maybe your friends will say...

"Trans people have a lot of mental health issues, do you really want to take that on?"

"But if you go out with a trans person, what does that make you?"

"Are you really a lesbian then, if you're dating a trans woman?"

"What are you going to tell your family?"

...and of course...

"How will you have sex?"

And suddenly that person you found attractive, who ticked all the boxes, doesn't seem to fit as well as they did before you knew.

I know not every person will think like this, but based on both what I know from personal experience, and

from what other trans people I've spoken with have told me, quite a lot of people do.

In fact, everything I've quoted as things people think and say are actual things I've had people tell me.

In my last long-term relationship, my partner's friends, upon learning that she was dating a trans woman, all expressed concern about my mental health, despite knowing nothing about me, other than that I was trans.

A friend of mine told me that after she'd introduced her new partner to her friends, one of them came up to her and asked if she was bisexual now she was dating a trans woman.

Another told me about how she actually lost supposed friends over her choice of partner, all because she was trans.

Talking to other people, it quickly becomes evident that preconceptions of trans people run deep. This stigmatisation is insidious and ingrained, and causes untold damage both to us as a society and as individuals.

It's a similar story when you look at online dating. I've been single for two years and nine months, not that



PHOTO FREYA BENSON

Need IVF but can't afford it?

Do you need IVF? If so, you may be able to help yourself and another woman. By sharing your eggs, you could receive standard IVF treatment free at The Lister Fertility Clinic, one of London's top fertility centres.

If you're 21-35, need IVF and are happy to share your eggs, please contact The Lister Fertility Clinic

t: 020 7881 4036
e: eggdonation@lfclinic.com
w: www.needivf.co.uk



Quote reference

DIVA

Sheffield Hallam University

**Are you aged under 60
and have experienced the loss of a
same-sex partner?**

Dr Sonja Ellis and Dr Rachel Abbott – based at Sheffield Hallam University - are undertaking a funded research project on same-sex partner bereavement.

We are seeking individuals who have experienced the death of a same-sex partner 6-12 months ago, or longer, and who would be willing to participate in an online interview.

If you meet the criteria specified here, and would like more information, please contact Dr Sonja Ellis by email (S.J.Ellis@shu.ac.uk) or phone (0114 225 2484).



I'm counting or anything, and in that time I've messaged a lot of people. In my profile I say that I'm trans as I want people to know, but I also always mention it before I meet someone in real life, just because sometimes people miss it. I say sometimes here but I really mean most of the time.

As soon as the words "Hey, by the way, did you notice in my profile that I'm trans?" pop up on the screen, a couple of things happen.

First there's the pause. This can take up to 30 minutes. Then I get two things. First people always say, "Wow, I wouldn't have known!"

This is the standard response when people don't realise, and I'm never sure what to say. It's meant as a compliment, but it's also a loaded compliment, as if by not being obviously trans I'm deceiving people, or hiding my identity. The implication that, as a trans woman, I'm only attractive if I don't look trans is an unpleasant and frequent occurrence, especially when it comes to dating.

Then we get to the crunch. How people word it varies, but the overall theme is nope.

I've had the brutally direct ("I don't do trans"), the honest ("I'd only be sleeping with you to see what it's like"), the awkward misdirection ("I'm not actually looking for anything right now, don't know why I'm even on this site, haha"), the blind panic (blocked), the gentle let-down ("We can meet, but you'd have to understand it would just be as friends") and, of course, the classic I've-got-no-idea-what-that-really-means-so-I'll-say-the-first-thing-that-comes-into-my-head ("OMG! You're a ladyboy?").

As before, these responses are all things people have actually said, word for word.

I'm not alone in this, either.

I spoke to Maeve, a trans woman from Brighton, about her experiences of online dating.

"Well, I have experiences of online dating such as Tinder and OKCupid, both of which I stopped using. I did an experiment for a week where I put that I was trans on my profile and I got no interest whatsoever. Then the following week I took it off and I did get some

banter going with people until I told them that I'm trans and then it stopped pretty much immediately. That's pretty depressing."

This experience isn't uncommon when it comes to interactions with trans people. I've heard similar stories time and time again, where as soon as someone's trans identity is known, whether through disclosure or the other person realising, the trans person is disregarded completely.

Even when trans people do enter into relationships though, it doesn't always get easier. Audrey, a 25-year-old trans woman, told me about how she feels when out with her girlfriend.

"It has been quite difficult to navigate how the world sees us. Till recently we've been perceived as a straight couple. Now we face homophobia, transphobia, weird looks, comments... We are the same people, sharing the same love, but the world suddenly became extremely hostile. It suddenly isn't safe to make out in public spaces. It's weird and scary and sad. We aren't used to it, so the reactions often take us by surprise."

The stigma attached to trans people runs deep in our society, to the point where anyone seen to be dating a trans person also faces prejudice, and stigmatisation. You have to ask yourself, if society as a whole is so against this, then is it any wonder that people switch off as soon as someone's trans identity is known?

Even when this isn't the case, people's lack of knowledge and understanding can still be damaging.

Josie, 36, told me about the time she slept with a cis woman after meeting her online. "The date seemed to go really well, and we went back to hers, but after sleeping together, she turned to me and asked why my boobs were so small. I'd already told her I was a trans woman, but the directness of this threw me completely. She then followed this up by telling me that if I really wanted to be a woman that I should get surgery to make them bigger. Needless to say I left soon after that."

Josie later told me that this felt like she'd been dragged back to reality, after getting her hopes up that someone might finally be ok about her

being trans.

So what can we do? Obviously, to say that you should sleep with every trans person you meet is both an extreme solution, and also not what attraction is about.

Mostly we sleep with people because we find something about them attractive. Quite often, at the start, that attraction is a physical one, so maybe I'm saying this:

You meet someone, either in real life or online, and you find them attractive. You message them, or go and talk to them, and find out you share similar views, or interests, and you think to yourself, "I like this person".

Maybe there's some flirting, and you're getting a good feeling. Maybe this is going somewhere.

And then they say they're trans.

This is the bit where, if you're thinking, "I'm not sure about this," you need to stop. You need to stop and think, "What's changed?"

If you still find them attractive, interesting, funny, clever or any of the other things you found yourself drawn too before, then what exactly has changed?

Because in reality, the only thing that's changed is that someone you've only just met has felt comfortable enough to tell you something about themselves. They've felt comfortable enough to tell you something about themselves that they know is stigmatised and rejected on a daily basis.

Telling someone that you're trans is an act of bravery. The default response that I, and many others, expect when we disclose this, especially in terms of relationships and sex, is of rejection.

Every time we tell someone, we are putting our faith in them. We are trusting them not to go with the default. We are trusting them, we are trusting you, with something so precious, so personal, and so fragile.

This is why you need to stop. This is why you need to think. This is why you need to remember that the only thing that's really changed is that someone has decided you're amazing enough to be let in. 📍

What are you thinking? Let us know.
letters@divamag.co.uk

Telling
someone
that you're
trans is
an act of
bravery

| COVER STORY |

L'AMOUR FOU

WHEN TWO LOVERS MEET IN A STRANGER'S DIVINELY
DECADENT MANHATTAN APARTMENT, SPARKS BEGIN TO FLY



ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT

More information on p5 | divadigital.co.uk

EMILY (LEFT) WEARS
SILK CHIFFON AND BLACK CHAIN GOWN
BY **NATALIA FEDNER** HAUTE COUTURE
EARRINGS AND BRACELET CZ BY **KENNETH JAY LANE**

ALI (RIGHT) WEARS
GOLD CHAIN DRESS BY **NATALIA FEDNER** HAUTE COUTURE
DUQUessa DOMINANTE BRA BY **LOVE CAGE NYC**
SAXA HIGH-WAISTED SUSPENDER
PANTIES BY **ANDRÉ CICCARELLI**
ENCRUSTED RING CZ BY **KENNETH JAY LANE**
CUFF BY **ALIBI NYC**



PHOTOGRAPHER **SOPHY HOLLAND**
STYLIST **CHRISTINA PACELLI**
MAKE-UP ARTIST **ROBERT GREENE**
USING **KEVYN AUCOIN BEAUTY**
HAIR STYLIST **GARETH BROMELL** USING **ORIBE**
ASSISTANT / BTS PHOTOGRAPHY **MADDY TALIAS**
STYLING ASSISTANT **KASANDRA NICHOLE**
SPECIAL THANKS TO **CINDY GALLOP**
PAINTING BY **PAUL RICHARD**
SHOT ON LOCATION AT **THE BLACK APARTMENT**





ALI (LEFT) WEARS
WRAP BRA, VOYEUR HARNESS,
STRAP SUSPENDER AND HARNESS
THONG BY **BORDELLE**
OPAQUE STAY UP STOCKINGS BY **FALKE**
HAND RINGS BY **AOKO SU**

CRYSTAL EARRINGS BY **HAUS OF TOPPER**
HEELS BY **SCHUTZ**
EMILY (RIGHT) WEARS
CAGE BRALETTE BY **ANJEL SKULL**
@ MSTR OF DISGUISE
DUQUESSA DOMINANTE BRA BY **LOVE CAGE NYC**

TROUSERS BY **SANDRO**
BOW TIE, **STYLIST'S OWN**
HITCH RING CLASSIC EARRING
BY **BOND HARDWARE**
RINGS BY **AOKO SU**
OXFORD PLATFORMS BY **ALEXANDER WANG**

EMILY (LEFT) WEARS
ALAEA TIE-IN PANTY
BY **ANDRÉ CICCARELLI**
SEPTUM RING, **STYLIST'S OWN**

ALI (RIGHT) WEARS
BODYSUIT BY **AMEN**
RIGHT-HAND RINGS BY **AOKO SU**
LEFT-HAND RING BY **MATERIA PRIMA NYC**

NEXT PAGE:
ALI (LEFT) WEARS
CROPPED MESH TOP WITH
APPLIQUÉ BY **JOSE DURAN**
LEATHER SKIRT BY **CHARLOTTE RONSON**
DUAL WARRIOR RINGS BY **VALENTINA KOVA**
HITCH RING DOUBLE PEARL CUFF
BY **BOND HARDWARE**

EMILY (RIGHT) WEARS
CHEEKY CHAIN HIPSTER PANTY
BY **HANKY PANKY AFTER MIDNIGHT**
SILVER BODYCHAIN BY **LARUICCI**
GOLD BODYCHAIN BY **SEASONAL WHISPERS**
PERFORATED WRIST CUFF BY **BOND HARDWARE**
CRYSTAL EARRINGS BY **HAUS OF TOPPER**



ALI (LEFT) WEARS
NADIA BODYSUIT BY **VALENTINA KOVA**
LINKED HARNESS PENCIL SKIRT BY **ZANA BAYNE**
HITCH RING DOUBLE PEARL MINI PENDANT
NECKLACE BY **BOND HARDWARE**
HITCH RING PEARL BAR EARRINGS
BY **BOND HARDWARE**
ENCRUSTED RING CZ BY **KENNETH JAY LANE**
RINGS BY **WXYZ JEWELRY**
JANIS PLATFORM SANDALS BY **SAINT LAURENT**

EMILY (RIGHT) WEARS
BOUND BY **DESIRE BUSTIER, LOVE CAGE NYC**
CAGE ME WAIST PIECE BY **ANJEL SKULL**
CHEEKY CHAIN HIPSTER PANTY
BY **HANKY PANKY AFTER MIDNIGHT**
PIETRO BRACELET AND WARRIOR RING
BY **VALENTINA KOVA**
STOCKINGS BY **AGENT PROVOCATEUR**
OXFORD PLATFORMS BY **ALEXANDER WANG**



| COVER STORY |

ALI (*LEFT*) WEARS
JANIS PLATFORM SANDALS
BY **SAINT LAURENT**

EMILY (*RIGHT*) WEARS
SUEDE LACE-UP MESH TALL BOOT
BY **GIANVITO ROSSI**



A pile of blonde wigs sprawled over the conference room table signals the presence of country singer Tammy WhyNot.

"Do you want to talk to Lois or Tammy?" comes the challenge – brazen in nature, self-doubting in tone – from the performance-artist-turned-researcher across the room.

I look from Lois Weaver to the wigs and back to Weaver again, before blurting out in panic, "Lois". I wonder how tonight's group of Londoners – for whom the wigs are destined – will react. Even with a Louisiana girlfriend and nascent appreciation for the US South, my British gut instinct is to eschew the Partonesque.

But Lois Weaver, long-time member of the lesbian arts community, has learned to embrace her Southern roots. "I hated country music and did everything I could to escape it," she says. "But it came back. So I re-appropriated it and turned it into this character, Tammy WhyNot."

Her ingenious stage persona has accompanied Weaver through 35 years of clubs, cafes and theatres, in Europe and the US. "She's got this amazing sense of wonder," says Weaver of her alter-ego. "She's not embarrassed about doing things; she's not worried about failing. So that makes the audience a little bit more relaxed about themselves."

Tammy WhyNot first emerged at New York's Spiderwoman Theatre in 1978, before becoming a regular at the lesbian/feminist WOW Cafe during the eighties. "If the material was a bit too avant-garde, Tammy could go, 'Ooh, that was weird,' and people would relax, you know?" explains Weaver.

Her most recent stage show, *What Tammy Needs To Know About Getting Old And Having Sex*, continues to push boundaries. "I go up to people and say, 'Are you having sex now? How often are you having it?'," says the Virginia-born performer. "And because it's Tammy, people will answer."

The 65-year-old recruits local seniors as backing singers for her themed numbers. This *Lemon's Still Got A Whole Load Of Juice* needs no explanation. *Demented Forsythia* is

a humorous love song to a woman with dementia. "I fell in love with demented Forsythia..." sings Weaver. "I talk about how she doesn't remember my name, but I know she loves me just the same."

The *Time I Wasted In K-Mart* pokes fun at the things Weaver has done instead of having sex. "I don't care if you don't want to have sex," she explains. "I'm as interested in that as if you're having sex. How do you function?"

The show had very personal origins. "As I started to get older, I didn't feel that sexual," admits the university professor. "And I thought, is that what happens? Nobody talks about that. I mean, they say you dry up and lose your libido. And of course there's lesbian bed death. But there's no positive conversation about does desire change and if so, how? And what do you do about it, or instead of it? And I wanted to have those conversations."

So she did. In New York, with an older lesbian group, Weaver "really got down to the nitty-gritty. There were lots of women in their 80s who were still looking for someone to have sex with. There were loads of people there who had long-term relationships and weren't having sex or were having a different kind of sex and feeling very happy about that."

Weaver has worked with several groups of seniors, including five days of focused "chit-chat" in a mixed-sex retirement home in Croatia.

So far, she hasn't had the same success with older lesbians in the UK, however. At one LGBT group in Brighton, "it was hard to get anything out of them," she confides. "People didn't want to talk about sex." On reflection, she wonders whether the problem might have been the mixed-gender group: "My generation and older, gay men and lesbians didn't mix that much. And we certainly didn't reveal that much to each other, for loads of reasons and probably very good reasons. We have more to protect."

Weaver also wants to challenge traditional notions of education. After moving to London in 1993 and spending four years as artistic director of

LOIS WEAVER
AND HER
OUTSPOKEN
ALTER-EGO
TAMMY
WHYNOT
CONFRONT
ISSUES OF SEX
AND AGEING
WORDS CATHERINE
MURRAY

the Gay Sweatshop Theatre Company, she was offered a teaching position at Queen Mary, University of London. This launched her *What Tammy Needs To Know* project. "I portrayed myself as this blonde hillbilly who didn't have the advantages of education, so was travelling the world trying to get everyone to tell her what she needed to know," she explains. It was a way to engage the audience, while simultaneously critiquing class and education: "She could be naïve on everyone else's behalf."

Back at the Wellcome Collection in London, the jumble of wigs awaits the women who will tonight practice hosting visitors to *The Institute Of Sexology* exhibition. The idea, once again, is to facilitate dialogue on difficult topics. "I'd like to reclaim the word hostess. I think there's a lot that we can do in terms of public engagement with ideas if we engage people in a conversation as opposed to throwing information at them."

I sense pre-performance anxiety. It must be daunting, I propose: that moment before the women walk into the room, not knowing if they will take the plunge or if Weaver will have to coax them out of their shells.

"It is, actually," she admits, before falling silent, as if she's revealed a weakness. Or perhaps just wants me to leave so she can get into character.

Weaver is an intriguing mix of outgoing performer and thoughtful academic. You get the feeling that deep down she might be more comfortable writing about people than compering them. Yet she has spent almost four decades as a country-singer-turned-lesbian-performance-artist. I suspect the audience might not be the only ones who need Tammy WhyNot's larger-than-life persona to broker those difficult conversations. **D**

What Tammy Needs To Know About Getting Old And Having Sex will run at the Wellcome Collection in London from 21 to 23 May.

wellcomecollection.org

If you are over 65 and would like to share your experiences, Tammy and Lois will be holding drop-in sessions in April and May on Tuesdays, 2-4 pm, at Queen Mary, University of London. Email TammyWhyNot@gmail.com.

"Tammy's not embarrassed and that makes the audience a bit more relaxed themselves"

**THIS LEMON'S STILL GOT
A WHOLE LOAD OF JUICE**



Yorkshire beauty:
Holdsworth House Hotel from the air,
(from left) Hebden Bridge,
Hardcastle Crag stepping stones,
Holdsworth House Hotel (top) and
Shibden Hall (bottom)



Lez Tango In Halifax

For an anniversary getaway with a difference, I whisked the wife off to Yorkshire for a “Real Last Tango In Halifax” break at the Holdsworth House Hotel, as featured in the BBC drama Last Tango In Halifax.

The fun started with a 200-mile drive from London to Halifax. The dark clouds, which had formed as we arrived, released a blanket of sleet as we walked towards the atmospheric Shibden Hall, just outside Halifax. Nevertheless, the grand medieval home of lesbian legend Anne Lister was an impressive sight.

Our tickets included a special Anne Lister tour (call ahead for details). A friendly member of staff introduced us to a local volunteer, Christine, a charming lady who fondly remembered playing in the grounds as a young girl. Dating back to 1420, Shibden Hall may impress, but it has a cosy, lived-in feeling to it. Christine exudes such passion for Anne Lister and Shibden Hall that

DAVINA SHAH
WHISKS HER
WIFE TO WEST
YORKSHIRE
FOR A
MEMORABLE
ANNIVERSARY
BREAK

Prepare to
feel awe
for lesbian
legend
Anne Lister

our hour passed in the blink of an eye. We also got a tour of the tower, off limits to regular visitors.

Be prepared to feel awe for Anne Lister. Born in 1791, she inherited Shibden and was an influential local landowner. We heard of her trips to Europe and further east, visiting a harem and drinking tea with Russian aristocracy; and how she took workers to the local Stumps Cross Inn for a round of drinks after they had laid an extensive drive. (The pub still stands today if you fancy a swift half.) Anne Lister most certainly was the first modern lesbian, documenting her affairs in coded diaries. She died in 1840 of fever whilst travelling with her lover Ann Walker in Kutaisi, Georgia.

A 17th century barn holds a folk museum, which is well worth a visit, and keep your eyes peeled for the stone Lister lion to the west of the building. If you visit during the warmer months, there is a boating lake, café

and trails around the estate to enjoy, too.

After a wonderful day at Shibden Hall, it takes 10 minutes to drive to Holdsworth House Hotel. The four star Jacobean manor has a romantic listed gazebo and a pretty walled courtyard. Inside, open fires and cosy lounges await, while the rooms are decorated with antiques and tapestries.

As it was our anniversary, I’d booked one of the suites with a sitting room and bathroom on the ground floor, and stairs to a galleried bedroom decorated with luxurious soft furnishings. By the time our freshly-baked scones and frappuccino arrived, we were already snuggled up in our fluffy bathrobes and slippers, tucking into a box of Yorkshire chocolates, all included in our package.

Later that evening, we were served a delicious dinner by candlelight in the 17th century, oak-panelled restaurant. The two AA Rosette à la carte restau-



rant is served by award-winning chefs using Yorkshire ingredients. Staff were happy to show us where Last Tango's lesbian couple Kate and Caroline had been filmed in the hotel.

The next morning the weather had improved dramatically. We indulged in a hearty Yorkshire breakfast and took a scenic 20-minute drive overlooking sweeping moors to Hebden Bridge, known as the "lesbian capital of the UK" thanks to its large community of lady-lovers. It was a crisp and sunny day – perfect for exploring the quaint market town with its artisan shops, stone bridges, cafes and galleries. Pick up a piece of bespoke jewellery or craft from the Heart Gallery located on Market Street (heartgallery.co.uk). For a bite to eat, the Lamp-post Café and Boutique (thelamp-postcafe.co.uk) – feeding hound and human alike – was recommended by HebdenBridgeLesbians.com.

I parked in the easily-recognisable Garden Street car park, which Derek uses in the very first episode of Last Tango before meeting Celia. From there, it is a short walk over the road to the tourist centre, where staff can help plan your day. Nearby is the striking Picture House, which first opened its doors in 1921.

Historian Helena Whitbread, who painstakingly deciphered Anne Lister's coded diaries, confirms that Anne

stayed overnight in Hebden Bridge with her aunt on 21 June 1823, when they were on their way back from a tour of Craven in the Yorkshire Dales. They lodged at the White Horse Inn. It seems Hebden Bridge was destined to draw lesbians from very early on!

Our next stop is the weavers' village of Heptonstall, set high above the narrow valley of Hebden with steep, cobbled streets. This picturesque village allows for wonderful views of Hebden Bridge and the surrounding hills. The octagonal Methodist chapel is the oldest in the country, celebrating 250 years in 2014.

A highlight of our trip was the picturesque woodland of Hardcastle Craggs, an area of outstanding beauty

known as Little Switzerland. You can walk up from Hebden Bridge, but we parked at the pay and display car park just before the entrance to the estate and walked two miles onto the trail. The vast wooded area made for a romantic walk as we became one with nature; just the thing for two city girls. We reached a river with stepping stones and a humpback bridge; a short walk down the trail is the beautiful Gibson Mill and tumbling waterfalls (nationaltrust.org.uk/hardcastle-craggs).

We were sad to leave Holdsworth House Hotel, but all good things must come to an end. En route back to London we visited the Bronte Parsonage Museum, home of literary sisters Charlotte, Emily and Ann Bronte (bronte.org.uk). You will find a lovely collection of personal artefacts, the only known painting of all three sisters together – painted by their brother, Branwell – and the actual table where they sat writing poetry and novels such as Jayne Eyre, Wuthering Heights and Agnes Grey. If you look carefully, you can see the letter "E" carved into the wood.

As we pick up a classic or two from the gift shop, Charlotte Bronte's words on the wall make us pause as we exit: "I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will." A perfect thought to end a perfect trip. ①

MORE INFO

Book your own Real Last Tango in Halifax break at holdsworthhouse.co.uk.

Shibden Hall

museums.calderdale.gov.uk/visit/shibden-hall

01422-352-246/321-455

Hebden Bridge Burlesque

Festival, 30 April-3 May,
hebdenbridgeburlesquefestival.co.uk.

Handmade Parade, 7 June,

handmadeparade.co.uk/hebden-bridge-parade.



Queer is Nice

Surprisingly, with a population of only 345,000, Nice has an LGBT scene which rivals that of much larger cities, including London.

This year saw the city's first QueerNaval (lou-queernaval.com), an extravagant addition to the official carnival line-up, which is now in its 131st year. The carnival attracts more than a million visitors across three weeks in February, and the QueerNaval was certainly the highlight of my trip. I'm still finding confetti in some rather intimate places!

The night-time float procession, funded completely by donations, included dancers, drummers and a whole host of colourful queer creatures. Deemed a roaring success by organisers, 2016's event promises to be even bigger and better... and with more confetti.

This fantastic spectacle joins other popular annual events including the Pride parade every summer. Cinema lover? Check out the In & Out film festival. Created in 2009, this LGBT film festival presents an eclectic and diverse programme and comes to Nice for 10 days every April.

Away from the big events, day to day Nice is also very queer. Capital of the Côte d'Azur, the city is full of gay and gay-friendly establishments and is

FRANCE'S FIFTH BIGGEST CITY OFFERS A WONDERFUL WORLD OF QUEER, DISCOVERS CARRIE LYELL

the first city in France to have obtained the Travel Out Now's Gay Comfort international label, awarded by IGLTA (iglta.org). Many hotels are welcoming to LGBT couples, including the four star Hotel Ellington which hosted a queer cocktail hour for us before the QueerNaval.

As with most (if not all) cities, men dominate the scene with their saunas, sex clubs and cruising bars (I admit having a chuckle at Le Cockring), but even though there is no longer a full-time designated lesbian bar or club, many host women's nights and there is still plenty for us to do.

One of my favourite bars in Nice was lesbian-run l'Alchimiste Mixologie (tinyurl.com/DIVAcocktails), a friendly cocktail bar serving a mixture of classic drinks and some more experimental ones. Try the Stonewall Riot, but be warned: it's strong. Bonus trivia: the owner used to be one of Ultra Nate's dancers.

Still want to party? Once the bars close, head to Kult, Glam or Bar Bitch, which often host lesbian nights. Drinks are expensive in Nice, and with many clubs open until at least 5am, make sure you've got plenty of cash on you – or a winning smile, at least.

If drinking isn't your scene, there are also regular events organised by

Caram'elles (caramelles06.free.fr), an association which provides opportunities for women to meet and participate in a variety of activities encompassing sport, culture and much more, and Nice's LGBT Centre (centrelgbt06.fr).

If you're hungry, there are plenty of cafes and restaurants designated LGBT-friendly – many of which display a rainbow sticker in the window. Businesses are given a chance to earn a "gay comfort certification" by the tourist office and those who sign a quality service pledge are given a logo to display. Find the full guide at tinyurl.com/DIVAguideNice.

I really liked Falabrak Fabrik in the city's old town. The secondhand shop-come-cafe was hosting a pop-up by veggie/vegan chef Marica Concillo (tinyurl.com/DIVAvégchef) when I visited. If you want to try some classic niçois cuisine, Acchiardo is wonderful, and I also really enjoyed Attimi, an Italian restaurant, which is part of the Slow Food Association. For something a little sweeter, swing by Artisan chocolatier Jean-Patrice (chocolaterie-paci.fr), famous for his chocolate raviolis, who made a special chocolate surprise for the journalists on our trip. ☺

For more on LGBT Nice, check out Nice Tourisme's guide at nicetourisme.com/pro-nice-gay-friendly.

WAY
Fly direct to Nice from UK cities including London, Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh from as little as £64 return.



PRIDE OVERSEAS
**GAY PRIDE
MASPALOMAS**



Gran Canaria is full of pride this month with one of Europe's longest celebrations of all things non-heterosexual taking place at Maspalomas, 8-17 May. Following on from its success last year there will also be a VIP area with a private lounge, bar and an opportunity to meet the featured performers.

gaypridemaspalomas.com

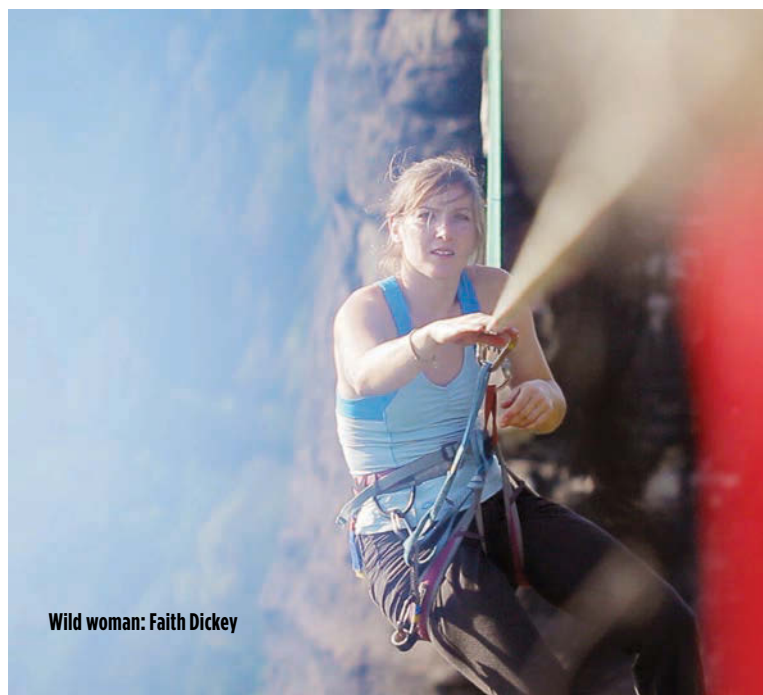
PARTY TIME
L FEST DEL MAR

Southeast Spain, sun, sand, ladies and music sound any good to you? If so, there's still time to bag your spot at L Fest Del Mar, 29-31 May (but hurry – there are only 250 tickets available). Located at a private beach club right at the tip of the La Manga strip peninsula in Murcia, the fringe festival runs throughout the entire week until 4 June and highlights include a cocktail party, boat trip, karaoke, and cinema on the beach. Whatever you do though, don't miss the grand fiesta, which takes place at the weekend, with DJs from Croatia, Holland, Norway and UK, as well as acoustic music playing throughout. Weekend tickets are £99.

lfest.co.uk/about-l-fest-del-mar



FIRST CLASSES



Wild woman: Faith Dickey

DON'T MISS

BANFF MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL... ON TOUR

If you're the type to spend hours glued to YouTube videos of extreme sports, then the Banff Mountain Film Festival is going to blow your mind. Touring the UK and Ireland until 6 June, these short films are showing at various venues around the country. There's the red programme – centred around climbing, paddling, biking and snow sports (to list just a few) and the blue programme – with a stronger focus on real-life stories. One particular highlight is *Wild Women*, a four-minute film about world record slack-liner Faith Dickey.

banff-uk.com

NEWSFLASH
**INTRODUCING...
THE ICE CAVE**

Now there's another reason to visit Iceland, beyond its super gay-friendly vibe and 24-hour summer sunlight. Formally opening on 1 June, the Ice Cave in Langjökull is Europe's second-largest ice-cap and can now be explored thanks to a 500 metre-long tunnel that takes visitors right into the centre of the glacier. Daily departures from Reykjavík, Húsafell and Kaldidalur. Trips start from 17,900 ISK (approximately £87).

icecave.is

Ice, ice baby: Inside Iceland's vast ice cave





ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT


More information on p5 | divadigital.co.uk

Boi Box

Dressing up, dancing and the best drag kings in town? Boi Box has it all. Featuring new and established kings, this completely unique night is like the best children's party you ever went to, but without the cake-induced nausea.

Hosted by Adam All and Apple Derrieres, Boi Box takes place on the first Wednesday of the month at SHE Soho, with a different theme each time, and if you haven't been before now is the time to check it out. But if you want a seat, make sure you get there early because it can get really busy.

Expect glitter, RuPaul, laughter and hijinks, but leave the drama at the door as Boi Box is a welcoming space for people to explore and escape. We guarantee you'll leave feeling inspired and/or wearing a mankini.

To find out about the next Boi Box event and for more information on how to get involved, follow Boi Box on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. 

adamall.co.uk

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PHOTOS EMMA BAILEY, PAUL GRACE



My Scene BRISTOL



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BEST PLACE FOR BRUNCH OR A COFFEE WITH FRIENDS

Easy Rawlins Diner in Easton is based on a detective in the novels by the infamous Walter Mosley. The food is locally-sourced and organic and has a quirky diner edge.

facebook.com/easyrawlinsdiner

BEST PLACE TO PULL

That's easy! In Bristol we have a well-known local lesbian ska band called Muff Said. They are infectious with a cheeky riot grrrl twist – whenever they play, all types of lesbians come out dancin 'n' skankin in droves.

muffsaid.co.uk

BEST PLACE TO PARTY

Next to my own kitchen? The Plough Inn. It has live music and DJs wielding soul, ska and reggae. Plus it's crawling with lovely women.

facebook.com/theplougheaston

BEST PLACE FOR A SEXY DATE

La Casbah Moroccan. It's my partner's and my favourite sexy date place. The food is always delicious with just enough spice and you can bring your own favourite bottle of wine. Plus, It has the added bonus to being close to our home for that dash to the boudoir.

la-casbah.co.uk

BEST PLACE TO EXPAND YOUR HORIZONS/ LEARN SOMETHING NEW

Would definitely have to be Stokes Croft, there is always something interesting happening around you – magicians, artists with spray cans painting political graffiti to live music and spoken word and tonnes of little workshops to take part in.

visitstokescroft.co.uk

BEST PLACE TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS

The Bristol Women's Casual Footie League. It's an awesome way to get off your buns and blow off steam on the footie field with like-minded women of various ages and athletic abilities.

bwfcl.co.uk

BEST PLACE TO GET SOME FRESH AIR

Ashton Court and Leigh Woods. There are friendly deer prancing around for your entertainment and kick ass bike trails.

tinyurl.com/DIVArde

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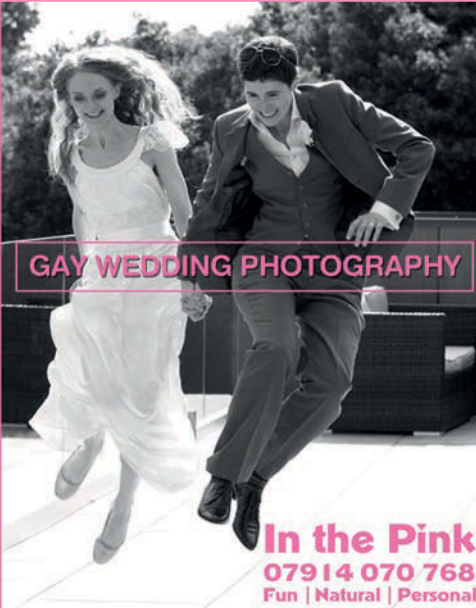
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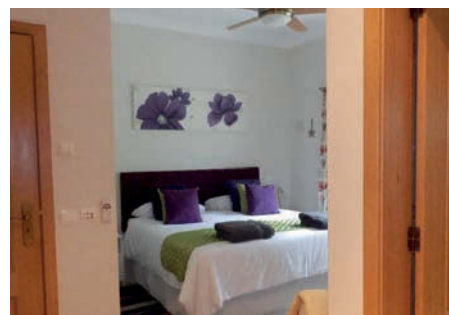
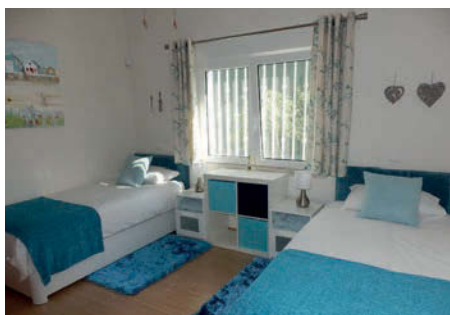
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Faro International Airport is a 20-minute drive away. Car hire is highly recommended as we are approximately 2km from the nearest public transport although taxis can be arranged.

The villa is strictly adults-only and non-smoking throughout the property and the grounds. We are open from Easter until early October and our prices are the same throughout the season. During July and August, a minimum three night stay is required and a minimum two night stay is required for all other months. We are not an exclusive LGBT accommodation; we welcome everyone!

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On The Road

I've been driving long-distance for seven years now, and the trucker life suits me. I like the solitude for the most part, but that day I felt like company. I was chuffed to bits when, at the exit to the service station, I saw this gorgeous woman with a backpack holding up a cardboard sign saying "Cardiff". I pulled over without hesitation.

"Are you going to Cardiff?" she shouted over the noise of the engine, her lilting Welsh accent making my heart skip a beat.

"Sure am, climb on up," I replied. She scrambled up into the driver's cab, bundling her backpack in. Student, I thought, and after a few miles of conversation it turned out I'd guessed right.

As she talked I couldn't help glancing at her holey purple tights and short skirt, teamed with a vest top which revealed pink bra straps. Her hair was black, long and glossy, with streaks of all sorts of crazy colours mingled in. All of this was much in contrast to my truckers' garb of jeans, plaid shirt and close-cropped, no-nonsense hair.

"I'm off home for the weekend, and couldn't afford the train fare," she explained.

"Getting your washing done?" I quipped.

"Something like that!" Lara laughed. "Actually, I've just split up from my girlfriend and felt like a bit of tea and sympathy."

A light went on in my head. "Oh," I bluffed, "I've just split up with my girlfriend too actually, so you definitely have my sympathy. Rough, isn't it?"

I could see Lara eyeing me with sudden interest and knew the atmosphere in the cab had shifted.

"I'm feeling a bit sleepy," she said, stretching. "Do you think I could have a lie down in the back there?" She motioned to my narrow sleeping quarters behind our seats.

"I'm due my break actually," I lied. "I'll pull into the next services and we can both have a rest, eh?"

Five minutes later and we were clambering into the back. There's not much room back there – it's definitely designed for one person – though I've had a few women in the back there with me over the years. Perk of the job.

"Still feeling sleepy?" I joked, and leaned into Lara, who grabbed my neck and snogged me passionately. There was no doubt she was a feisty one, I thought.

I kissed her neck and whispered in her ear "How do you like to be fucked?"

Panting, she answered, "I like it hard. You on top. I like something big inside me, stretching me open."

I smiled. "I think I can manage that," I said, reaching for what I call my box of tricks. I pulled out the largest dildo I have, along with a harness, and said "How's this for big?"

She gasped at the sight of it. "As long as you push it in slowly," she said, suddenly becoming all coy, which I kind of liked.

Whilst I fixed the harness and the dildo, Lara slipped out of her remaining clothes. She lay there on my bed

WHEN A
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TRUCKER
OBLIGES
SHORT STORY
BETTY BLACKBURN

and I took her in for a second. Her skin was the palest possible and her bush, which was black and full, stood out in contrast to her paleness.

I slowly parted her thighs and knelt in between them, running a finger down from her clit, around her already dripping pussy lips, and then back up to her clit. She moaned and raised her hips. I dipped a finger inside her, bathing it in her juices.

"I need your cock, NOW!" she begged.

"You'll have to wait," I said, a little sternly.

I moved down between her legs and took her clit into my mouth, sucking it until it grew bigger and even more sensitive. I then kissed my way up to her mouth and, as I did so, positioned the dildo between her cunt lips. Then slowly, gently, I pushed in all the way. Lara gasped and grabbed my arse, greedily keeping me inside her.

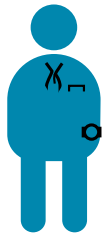
"I knew when I picked you up that this is what you wanted," I whispered.

But she couldn't reply, just gasped as I worked up a rhythm between her legs. I could feel the cab rocking. In a couple of minutes, what with her wanking her clit and me pumping her stretched pussy, she was grasping at my arse, biting my arm and coming like a wild woman.

After a while, laying spent on the cramped bed, she said, "My turn to make you come, now," and moved down between my legs.

I lay back and thought that it'd be a while before we got to Cardiff. **D**

I was
chuffed
to see a
gorgeous
woman
holding
up a sign
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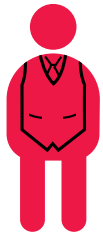
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inika.co.uk

WICCA WONDERS PACIFICA BEAUTY

New to the UK, this 100% vegan American brand looks like something Willow and Tara would sell at the magic shop in Buffy, so only invest if stars, moons and names like Solar Complete and Devocean aren't going to bug you. For those seeking a sheer ultra-lightweight base, Alight BB Cream (£16.99) is great for most fair to medium skin tones.

lucyroze.biz/pacifica



A few years ago, making up was hard to do – if you didn't want to put animal fats, shark oil and ground-up insects on your face, that is. Enter ethical make-up: the cruelty-free way to paint your skin, nails and lashes. Whether you go full Marilyn, only use the occasional smear of lipgloss, or don't touch the stuff except at Halloween, follow me into the vegan make-up jungle...

Joanna Benecke is a writer with a green tea addiction who believes grooming doesn't have to be a dirty word.

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VALUE VEGAN BENECOS

This brand appeals – not only because it's almost my surname – but also on account of its aim to bring natural products to the mass market. It has a growing vegan section; check out the nail varnish (£6.95) – it's free from the five toxins present in most brands, comes in loads of shades and lasts well.

benecos.co.uk



BARGAIN B. MAKE UP

For those who don't worry about their make up being natural or organic, but do want a good-value cruelty-free alternative to the likes of Nivea or Maybelline, head on down to Superdrug and stock up on their totally vegan B. Make Up range which caters for all skin types and tones. I've been enjoying the subtle colour of their B.Lipstick Rich in the enticingly named Eton Mess (£3.99).

superdrug.com



BRAND OF THE MONTH

VEGAN FACES

Even if you never use make-up, at some point you're bound to want face-paints. Fancy dress, children's party, Halloween – sooner or later you'll need to look like a tiger. But vegan options were near-impossible to find until Metala Theart founded the brilliant VF, creating natural, cruelty-free face-paints in a range of colours (from £4.95). Bonus: they're suitable for eczema sufferers! The company now also includes a range of "ordinary" make up. I'm a total convert to the awesome concealer (£8.95) and foundation (£14.95). The latter can be ordered in small tester jars (£2) to ensure you find your perfect shade.

veganfaces.co.uk



CREATURES IN YOUR MAKE-UP BAG & THEIR VEGAN ALTERNATIVES

TALLOW

Boiled animal fat used as a cheap skin-conditioning agent in makeup. The corpses come from many different sources: labs, slaughterhouses, zoos, shelters, roadkill. V-alternatives: vegetable tallow, Japan tallow, paraffin, ceresin.

CRYSTALLINE GUANINE/ PEARLESCENCE

Not, as the urban legend would have it, bat faeces, but ground-up fish scales used to produce a shiny effect in products like mascara and nail polish. V-alternatives: leguminous plants, synthetic pearl or aluminum and bronze particles.

SQUALANE

Shark liver oil used in lip balms, BB creams and foundations for its greasy, easily-absorbed consistency. V-alternatives: vegetable oils.

CARMINE/COCHINEAL/CARMINIC ACID

Female cochineal beetles are killed to produce red dye for lipsticks, lip balms, anything reddish basically. V-alternatives: alkanet root, beetroot.

For more info see peta.org/living/beauty/animal-ingredients-list.



FROM COMING OUT TO GOING OUT,
THROUGH FALLING IN (& OUT OF) LOVE,
TO MAKING NEW FRIENDS.

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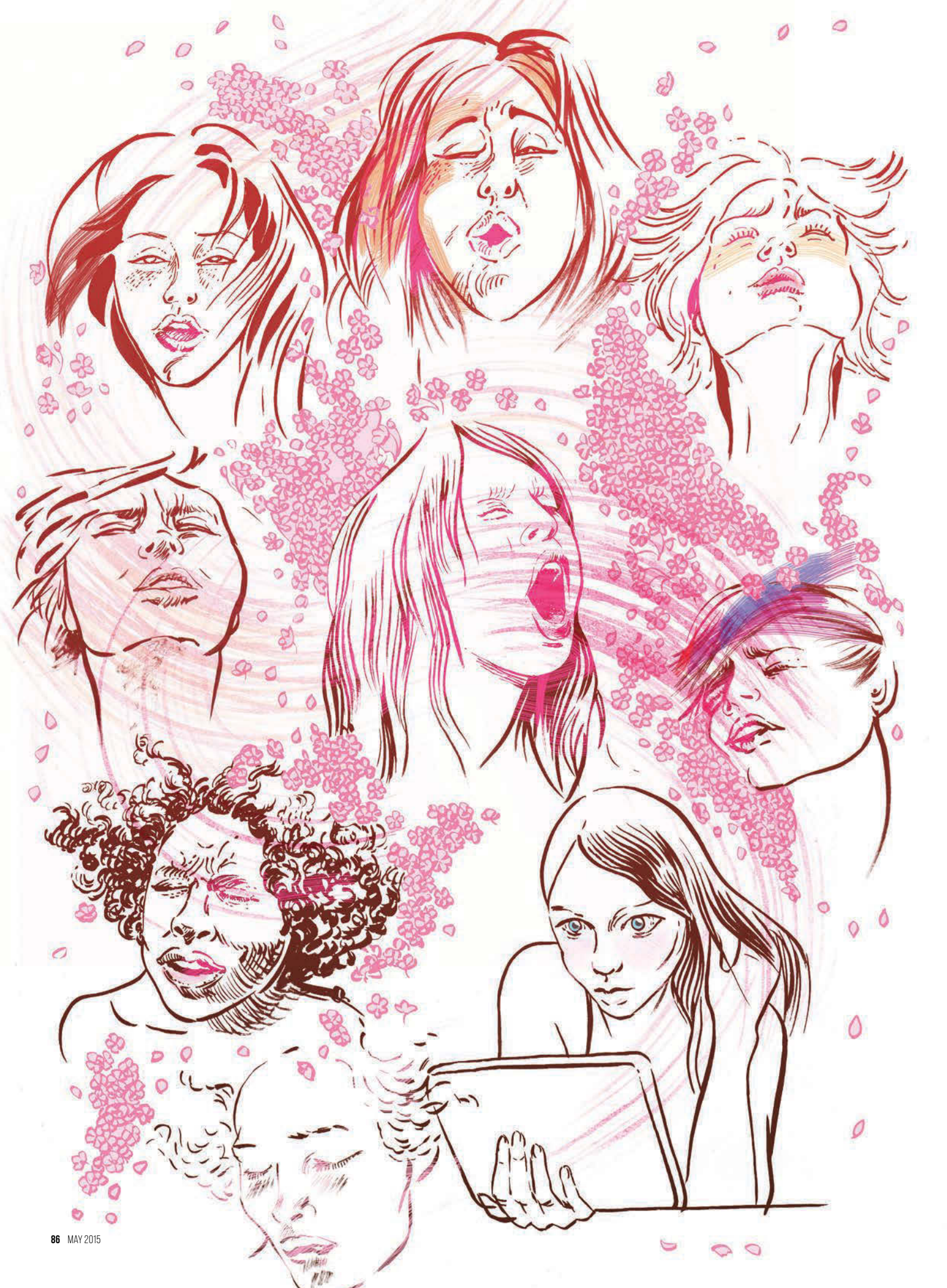
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WHAT'S YOUR SOLO SEX STYLE?

Whether you call it masturbating, self-pleasuring, playing with yourself, wanking, jilling off, or something else entirely, enjoying solo sex helps us build and maintain the foundations of our sexual confidence and pleasure. As Betty Dodson (octogenarian, artist, teacher, champion of masturbation, and author of *Sex For One*) says, it is "the ongoing love affair that each of us has with our self throughout our lifetime".

What does your "ongoing love affair" look like? How would you describe your solo sex style?

SLEEPY SUE

You've gone to bed but are having trouble getting to sleep. What nicer way to drift off than to give yourself a satisfying orgasm first? It's so easy to just slip your hands under the covers and get into an easy rhythm... Far more fulfilling than counting sheep.

TRIED AND TESTED

The way you first found pleasure is the way you revert to time and time again. Always on your front with your face pressing into the pillow to muffle your excited sighs? Always with the lights out and after nightfall? Always as quick as possible, just in case you get caught? Humping a pillow? Using the jet spray on the shower head? Fingers in your knickers with a lick of spit? Tried and tested techniques are reliable and enjoyable but you always have the option to add something new to your solo sex selection box too...

LOOK AT ME!

Sometimes you like to watch yourself in a mirror while you masturbate. The extra visual stimulation gets you off, you love looking and feeling so unrestrained, and you enjoy a glimpse into

ANNA SANSOM
EXPLORES
THE MANY
DIFFERENT
WAYS THERE
ARE TO
PLEASURE
YOURSELF

ILLUSTRATION
ALEXANDRA LAZAR

how a lover might see you too. You're probably also happy to invite your lover to watch how you touch yourself. They are delighted to learn more about how you like to be touched, and you get that extra thrill of having their full attention.

PORN-POWERED AND EROTICA-INSPIRED

Your solo foreplay includes reading a passage from literary smut, studying a sultry and suggestive image, or watching the moving parts of actors or real-life players. A quick flick through a dirty magazine, savouring another person's penned fantasy or searching online for your turn-on du jour whets your appetite and wets your knickers. There's an endless supply out there and you love finding just the right sexy stimulation.

FORGOTTEN TREASURE

In all honesty you just never think of masturbating. It doesn't occur to you to do it. You don't miss it. It may have been important to you when you were younger, or maybe not. You may have never really got the hang of it: rubbing until you were numb but still no orgasm. Or maybe you actually became very adept but, nonetheless, you just have no urge to self-pleasure now. It's forgotten but not gone; if there should ever come a time when you do want to open up that box, you'll find it is still full of treasure.

GOOD VIBRATIONS

You can't remember the last time you got yourself off with manual stimulation. A vibrator is a girl's best friend and you keep yours fully charged/with spare batteries to hand for whenever the mood strikes. You may even have a few to choose from. And some of them

may also have names.

There may come a time when the power goes out and you have to go back to basics... remembering how you feel under the touch of your own fingers is important too. It's good to have a choice.

YOUR GUILTY SECRET

Someone – your mother, a teacher, the church, your best friend, a lover – once told you it was wrong to touch yourself for your own pleasure. Now whenever you do it, or even just think about doing it, you feel guilty, shameful even. A part of you knows it is ok really to enjoy your body. Hopefully you are able to listen to that part and embrace your self-loving. They may have told you masturbation is dirty and wrong; you can reassure yourself that it is actually an act of self-love and acceptance.

YOUR FAVOURITE THING

You love to touch yourself! And not only that, you love to dress up for yourself, to buy toys, to set the scene with wine and candles, to make as much noise as you like – all just for you. You take your time or you make it a quickie. You have an endless imagination for new fantasies and scenarios; you feel lust for your own wondrous self. This body of yours brings you so much joy and delight. You are self-sufficient in your pleasure but you may also want to share it with a lover. You know there's always more to learn and discover and you consider yourself a willing student of self-pleasuring! **D**

May is International Masturbation Month! Anna asked DIVA readers to open up about their solo sex lives and you can read what they told her on the DIVA website at tinyurl.com/DIVADIY.

RESOURCES

SEX FOR ONE:
THE JOY OF
SELFLOVING
by Betty Dodson

SELF LOVING:
A GUIDE TO
FEMALE SEXUAL-
ITY AND ORGASM
(DVD)
by Betty Dodson

BETTER ORGASMS.
BETTER WORLD:
everything you
ever wanted to
know about solo
and partner sex,
*from Betty
Dodson and Carlin
Ross.*
dodsonandross.com



MAYBE MORE

CONTACT ME

Butch F 54. Enjoys walks in the country, meals out, poetry & theatre. Seeks like-minded F. Mancs. Box 515033 ☎ DV 515033

ATTRACTIVE, FEMININE

F, 52, but not into dresses & skirts. Seeks similar F, for nice meals & coffee. Gloucs. Box 298545 ☎ DV 298545

GOOD-LOOKING

Mixed-race F, late 30s, passionate, honest & caring. Seeks feminine, gay F for fun, maybe r/ship. Stoke-on-Trent. Box 196228 ☎ DV 196228

LOVING, CARING

Sincere, faithful F, 62. Enjoys music, walking & the beach. Seeks F partner with similar interests. Kent. Box 537564 ☎ DV 537564

GENUINE, FUN-LOVING

F, 52, likes cinema, nights in & out. Seeks F for fun times & possible r/ship. Mancs. Box 523480 ☎ DV 523480

AFFECTIONATE, CARING

F, 51, seeks genuine, similar F for f/ship & maybe more. Belfast. Box 357756 ☎ DV 357756

LOVELY

F, 27, seeks similar F for f/ship, fun & more. Wrexham. Box 620424

HONEST, SENSUAL

F, 33, 5'8", medium build, seeks similar F for good r/ship. Ldn. Box 584603

SINCERE, GAY

F, 36, seeks gay F for f/ship, nights out, meals out, etc. Rhyl. Box 163669

THROUGH THE MIST

Attractive F, 52, 5'5", hazel eyes, seeks F for f/ship & r/ship. Gloucs. Box 145226 ☎ DV 145226

LIFE, LOVE & HAPPINESS

Sincere, loving F, 56, seeks lovely, laid-back, feminine F to share life, love & happiness. Exeter. Box 623594 ☎ DV 623594

MUSIC LOVER

Fun, outgoing F, 41. Seeks F for nights in/out, socialising & cinema. Mancs. Box 291609

BI-CURIOUS BUXOM

F, 52, size 18, seeks bisexual, or curious F, 50-65, for f/ship & fun times. Hull. Box 417395 ☎ DV 417395

BIG & BEAUTIFUL

F, 49, big heart, fun, seeks F to be her soul mate. B'ham. Box 400696

AMIABLE, HONEST

F, 45, seeks genuine F for good f/ship & r/ship. Slough. Box 188074

SLIM, FEMININE

Bi F, 48, seeks similar F for fun, f/ship & maybe more. Central Mancs. Box 301282 ☎ DV 301282

HAPPY-GO-LUCKY

F, 53, slim build, WLTM F for f/ship, hopefully leading to LTR. W. Yorks. Box 411452

SINCERE, QUIET

F, 61, GSOH, has two dogs, seeks F for good f/ship & further. Omagh/Co. Tyrone. Box 660622 ☎ DV 660622

SENSUAL, HONEST

F, 52, medium build, seeks F for good times, maybe more. Soton. Box 499883

OUTGOING, FULL-FIGURED

Attractive bi lady, 57, seeks F of similar age for fun nights & more. Cotswolds. Box 515282 ☎ DV 515282

100% GAY

F, 54, seeks solvent, gay F for good laughs & r/ship. Mancs. Box 870496 ☎ DV 870496

DEEP, PASSIONATE

F, 54, seeks stimulating F with something to say for conversation & more. SE Ldn/anywhere. Box 269592

SINCERE, HAPPY

F, 50s, likes gardens & travel. Seeks nice F for something intimate. Belfast. Box 372189

FUN-LOVING, EASY-GOING

F, 40, likes laughs & nights out. Seeks similar F for fun & f/ship+. Mancs. Box 583561

JUST HAVEN'T MET YOU YET

Caring, genuine F, 53, 5'3", likes the outdoors, holidays & the coast. Seeks similar F for laughs & r/ship. Cheshire. Box 220543 ☎ DV 220543

BISEXUAL

F, 58, seeks lady, 45-60, for f/ship, maybe more. Nottingham. Box 957270 ☎ DV 957270

BOYISH SINGLE PARENT

F, 52, enjoys the gym, fishing, pool, nights in/out, seeks honest F, similar age, for f/ship, maybe more. Swindon. Box 271087 ☎ DV 271087

BABYFACE FEMALE

Lonely F, 37, seeks mixed race F for good lasting r/ship & shared future. Coventry. Box 100798 ☎ DV 100798

SPIRITUAL, SINCERE

F, 38, single mum, likes travel & writing. Seeks F for coffee, chats, possibly intimacy & more. Co. Down. Box 861404 ☎ DV 861404

HONEST, LOYAL, CARING

F, 62, n/s, large build, enjoys walks, theatre & film. WLTM F, 60+, for a forever r/ship. Kent. Box 704273

CREATIVE, OUTGOING, FUN

F, 30s, staffie owner, loves DJing, clubbing, singing, drawing & socialising. WLTM loyal, mixed-race gay F for r/ship. Cov. Box 783205 ☎ DV 783205

SINCERE, BLONDE

F, 37, single mum, seeks honest, loving F for real r/ship. Kent. Box 853359 ☎ DV 853359

FEMININE, YOUTHFUL

F, 51, GSOH, thoughtful, n/s, has ME, likes animals & mystery. Seeks understanding, caring F, 38-55, for laughs+. L'pool. Box 913989 ☎ DV 913989

POSITIVE, OUTGOING, PROFESS

F, 51, seeks F for dancing in the kitchen, dog walks on the beach, good food, laughter & romance. Newcastle. Box 436275

LOVING, LOYAL, FAITHFUL

F, 42, n/s, enjoys all the good things in life, seeks F, 36-48, for f/ship, fun times & maybe more. Devon. Box 868555 ☎ DV 868555

GROUNDED, GENUINE

F, 38, seeks F who is kind to strangers & keen to share their best memories with someone special. London. Box 223704 ☎ DV 223704

COSY NIGHTS IN

Sincere F, 62, medium build, likes animals, walks & some reading. Seeks n/s F f/ship & good r/ship. Warwick. Box 733509 ☎ DV 733509

LOUD, PROUD, CONFIDENT

F, 40, bubbly, likes dance & films. Seeks F for wild nights out & passionate nights in. Milton Keynes. Box 273975

FUN, TOMBOY

F, 36, likes football, cinema & nights out. Seeks feminine F, 30-40, for r/ship. Mancs. Box 798661 ☎ DV 798661

DARK-HAIRED, SOCIABLE

F, 45, 5'7", medium build, likes socialising, travel & motorbikes. Seeks similar F for r/ship. W Ldn, Surrey. Box 187431 ☎ DV 187431

ATTRACTIVE, FEMININE

F, 49, likes the gym, reading & holidays. Seeks feminine lady for good r/ship. Yorks. Box 999700 ☎ DV 999700

LIPSTICK LESBIAN

Attract, easy-going F, 50s, likes most things, seeks sim late 40s-50s F. Text preferred. Gloucs. Box 704295

CARING, LOYAL & HONEST

F, 69, loves good books & conversation & WLTM a free-thinking F with a sense of fun for f/ship, maybe more. Fife. Box 342583 ☎ DV 342583

YOUNG-AT-HEART FEM

F, 51, likes most things, seeks similar F for f/ship, maybe more. Gloucs. Box 403344

GOOD CONVERSATION

F, 49, seeks F, 40-50, with good outlook, for good conversation & plenty of laughs. Mancs. Box 177389

OUTGOING, BUBBLY

F, 49, fun, likes nights in/out & socialising. Seeks similar F for great r/ship. Co. Down. Box 657198 ☎ DV 657198

HONEST, EAGER

F, 43, seeks F for long-term, lasting r/ship. Darlington. Box 204027

HONEST, SINCERE

F, 50s, likes days out, animals & cosy nights in. Seeks feminine, gay F, 40-60s, for fun & hopefully r/ship. Notts. Box 161268 ☎ DV 161268

FRIENDLY, KIND

F, 52, 5'5", medium build, seeks similar F for mutual happiness & contentment. Mancs. Box 792911 ☎ DV 792911

GENUINE, FUN

F, 45, seeks F for socialising, laughter & r/ship. Mancs. Box 498200 ☎ DV 498200

GENUINE, SINCERE

F, 20, 5'3", seeks F for good times & intimacy. Glasgow. Box 252315

EASY-GOING, NICE

F, 45, likes a laugh & socialising. Seeks F for fun & possible r/ship. Mancs. Box 789818 ☎ DV 789818

GENUINE, FRIENDLY

F, 75, non-drinker, seeks F companion, GSOH, with car, for cinema, good food & more. Devon. Box 828190

HONEST, BISEXUAL

F, 49, 5'4", large build, seeks nice lady for f/ship & maybe more. Powys. Box 807825

ENTIRELY HONEST

F, 55, 5'10", has a dog & cat, likes long walks, a bit disabled, seeks F for good r/ship. Darlington. Box 381150

TEETOTAL, HONEST

F, 72, n/s, likes holidays, socialising & conversation. Seeks loving, caring F for good r/ship. Lancs. Box 822209

PROFESS, LIFE-LOVING

F, 60s, likes beach walks, golf & photography. Seeks kind, affectionate lady, GSOH, for r/ship. Hants. Box 457627

FRIENDLY, PLUMP, PRETTY

Bisexual lady, 61, seeks similar F for fun times. Gloucs. Box 237013

KIND-HEARTED, HONEST

F, 33, 5'8", medium build, likes walks, cinema & nights in. Seeks lovely F for r/ship. Co. Antrim. Box 194316

LOVING, CARING, GAY

F, 52, likes meals out, cinema & walks. Seeks caring, loving F for r/ship. Lancs. Box 745729 ☎ DV 745729

SINCERE, LOVING

F, 62, likes animals, quiet evenings & occasional meals out. Seeks F for loving r/ship. Herts. Box 405562

HONEST, AFFECTIONATE

F, 23, likes walks, films & good wine. Seeks F for good times & r/ship. Glasgow. Box 459448

FEMININE, SINCERE

F, 60, n/s, likes cinema, her dogs & walks. Seeks similar F for f/ship & maybe more. Cornwall. Box 289505 ☎ DV 289505

KIND, CARING

F, 45, likes cats, seeks F for loving r/ship. Stockport Box 442022

AMOROUS, EASY-GOING

F, 48, likes the coast, cinema & animals. Seeks similar F for good r/ship. Gloucs. Box 563608

SOCIABLE, SINCERE

F, 36, seeks feminine F, 30-40, for theatre, meals out & close times. Mancs. Box 978625 ☎ DV 978625

CUTE, GENTLE, BUTCH

F, 40, black, shaved head, cuddly build, seeks honest, feminine, loyal gay F for f/ship & maybe r/ship. W Mids. Box 507405

HAPPY, BI-CURIOUS

F, 48, blonde, loves doing nice things, seeks nice F for socialising, laughs & intimacy. Mancs. Box 115157

BI-CURIOUS, SOCIABLE

F, 32, likes socialising & partying. Seeks F to see what happens. Ldn. Box 470300

NO STRINGS

FEMALES RULE!

F, 22, seeks F for great times. B'ham. Box 556726

ATTRACTIVE, BISEXUAL

F, 60s, has a partner, seeks similar, bisexual lady for adult fun & f/ship. N Surrey/Middx. Box 812077

EASY-GOING, SOCIAL

F, 35, likes concerts, shopping & meals out. Seeks feminine F for fun times. Mancs. Box 123477

SENSUAL, FEMININE

F, 43, bisexual, seeks similar F for sensuality & experimentation. S Ldn. Box 591109

JUST FRIENDS

HONEST, FRIENDLY

F couple, 46, love music & meals out. Seeks like-minded F friends for nights out in Glasgow. Box 282737 ☎ DV 282737

LIFE BEGINS...

Animal-loving F, 33, seeks friends for socialising, laughter, intelligent conversation & a little bit of mischief. Somerset. Box 757543 ☎ DV 757543

SINCERE, TRUSTING

F, 48, likes the outdoors & learning Spanish. Seeks Fs for chats & genuine f/ship. Ldn. Box 359170

Customer Services:

Dating FAQs & Advice Line

0906 200 1036

Calls cost £1.02/min plus network extras

Complaints & Service Provider

0330 333 6946

CALL CHARGES: Calls to 09062 cost £1.02/min at all times (BT Premium Rate). Calls to 09067 cost 77p/min at all times. Calls to 0800 are free. Payphones & non BT network provider charges may vary, 0800 numbers may be chargeable from mobiles. **TEXT SERVICE:** Replying to an advert is charged at £1.50 for every text response received. Advertisers will be charged 50p for every text response received and 50p for texts alerting them that they have a voice message. Please take care to follow the instructions as all messages are charged for, including error messages - charges dependent on shortcode. All texts sent must be no more than 160 characters & your standard network charges apply. SMS shortcodes are reverse billed at the following rates: 85010 - 50p; 84010 - £1.50. Available on all UK networks. 18+ only. **Service provided by ATS, PO Box 788, London EC1V 7ZA. DISCLAIMER:** DIVA Magazine assumes no liability for the content of, or reply to, any personal advertisement. The advertiser assumes complete liability for the content of all replies to any advertisement or recorded message and for any claims made against DIVA Magazine as a result thereof. The advertiser agrees to indemnify and hold DIVA Magazine harmless from all costs, expenses (including our solicitor's fees), liabilities and damages resulting from or caused by the publication or recording placed by the advertiser, or any reply to such advertisement. By using Dial-a-Diva, the advertiser agrees not to leave his/her telephone number, last name, or address in his/her voice greeting message. Your ad may appear in other publications.

Lady Justice: The female statue on top of the Old Bailey represents impartiality

Laying down the law

WHO REGULATES SOLICITORS? LAY CHAIRPERSON ENID ROWLANDS EXPLAINS THE WORK OF THE SRA

“Last year, 61% of new lawyers were women”

There's a certain stereotype about who can be a solicitor, what they look like, where they're from and the kind of lifestyle they lead; what one might think of as a traditionally “establishment” figure. But as the first lay chairperson of the Solicitors Regulation Authority, the independent regulator in England and Wales, I'm determined the profession better reflects the public it serves. This means opening up more opportunities for women, individuals from the LGBT and BME communities and people with disabilities to qualify.

A Law Society survey found that although 90% of lesbian and gay solicitors are “out” in their personal life, only nine per cent of gay men and 27% of lesbians are out at work. In 2013, 97% of solicitors who provided data about their sexual orientation identified as heterosexual and yet official figures indicate that between five and seven percent of the population are LGBT.

Obviously this is concerning, but I'm pleased that we've seen some very positive changes recently. Last year, 61% of individuals joining the

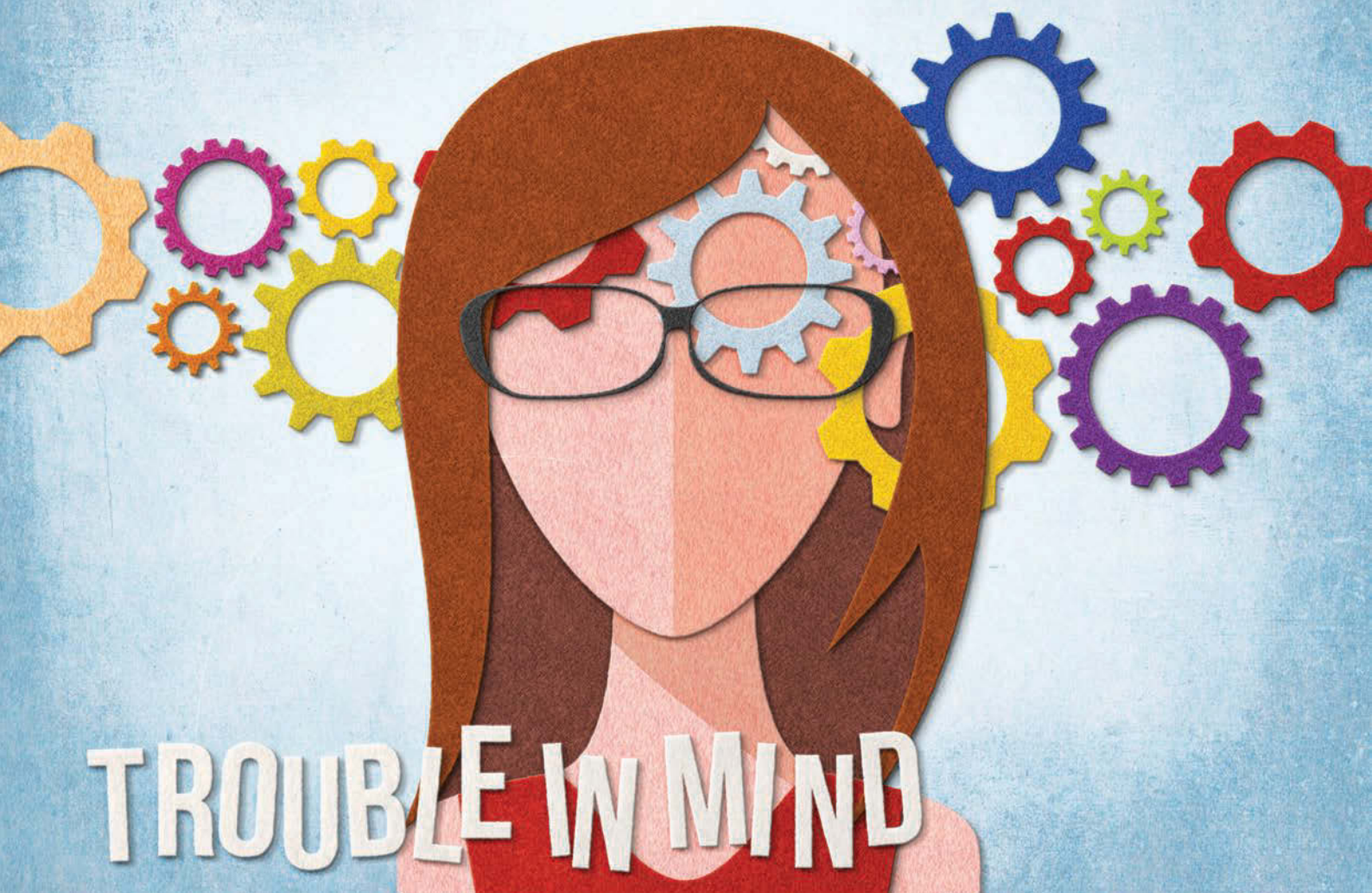
profession were women and this year saw Stonewall announce its first ever list of LGBT-inclusive law firms from its annual Workplace Equality Index. Recognising that such changes have been a long time coming, Stonewall commented: “It's great to celebrate the law firms that are leading by example in progressing diversity and inclusion within the sector. Eight years ago, no law firms featured in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index and it's hugely encouraging to see so many firms now taking the steps to ensure that their employees can be themselves in the workplace.”

As part of our strategy for 2015, the Solicitors Regulation Authority will be working with equality groups to understand better the issues faced by a wide range of demographics and look at what we can do to provide the additional support necessary. One of the events we recently held to celebrate International Women's Day was a talk on the 30% Club – a drive to increase the proportion of female board members by the end of 2015 and a statistic I'm proud to say the SRA

have surpassed at 40%.

As the regulator, a key part of our work is investigating solicitors and legal practices which may have fallen short of the standards we expect. We know that discrimination often occurs on the basis of one or more of the protected characteristics, such as race or sexuality, and if an individual feels they have grounds to complain, on this basis or any other, it's vital they have both the means and confidence to do so. We do receive some complaints about discrimination but it's likely that instances of discrimination are still going unreported. There's information about making a complaint on our website, together with details on how to contact us (sra.org.uk).

Finally, one of the things I'm most excited about is joining in this year's Pride events. The SRA's hometown is Birmingham, where the theme for the Pride event this year is Freedom. I hope that the steps we're taking will create a more equal and diverse profession, reflecting the wider community and with a workforce that feels free to be out at work. **①**



TROUBLE IN MIND

"Oh, it's so easy to be gay these days. I don't know why they even need their own venues any more," said the woman on my table. When I told her about the horrified looks my partner and I got on booking into a Brighton hotel, she said: "Well, if you will go to a traditional hotel, what can you expect?" Eh? I thought she just said it was easy to be gay.

As for the emotions that still sweep across many a person's face when you tell them you are in a same-sex relationship, it's little wonder so many LGBT people sometimes choose to hide their sexual orientation.

And to where does it all lead, this being made to feel like a weirdo? Secrecy, embarrassment, self-hatred, anger and, for many, a deep sense of shame.

Is it any surprise, then, that LGBT people experience a far higher incidence of mental distress than heterosexuals?

**WHY ARE
LESBIANS AND
BI WOMEN
MORE LIKELY
TO SUFFER
FROM POOR
MENTAL
HEALTH?**

**WORDS
KATRINA ALLEN**

"Everyone is at risk of mental health problems as we know, but research shows that LGBT people are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety and drug and alcohol misuse than those who identify as heterosexual," says Ruth Overton of PACE, an organisation aimed at improving mental health within the LGBT community.

"Our work with LGBT people would suggest that it is often the additional layer of pressure caused by living in a heteronormative society that can increase the likelihood of poorer mental health. The default position in society assumes that people are heterosexual and conform to the gender binary, [in other words] assumptions about what it is to be a man or a woman in terms of looks, clothes, behaviours, work, femininity, masculinity etc. At PACE, we believe that there is much more of a spectrum when it comes to gender. We regularly hear about the impact

on LGBT peoples' lives when they have been rejected by family and friends; not being able to be open about relationships or openly affectionate with a partner; being questioned about the right to have families; always having to make a decision about coming out with new people they meet."

So are mental health issues within the LGBT community, due to shame, oppression or simply lack of support?

"I'd say it was more a question of internalised homophobia," says therapist Elena Winch. "People take on the negative homophobic messages and, in some sense, believe them and it can lead to self-hatred, which in turn can lead to mental health issues. My partner Sarah and I run a B&B. Guests often ask me if we are sisters. My internalised homophobia stops me from telling them we aren't. It's partly because I don't want to shock or upset them but it's also my own embarrassment and

there is a degree of shame in that very thought. The reality is that not all our guests would be comfortable about it. We don't advertise the fact we are a couple. It feels safer that way."

Her partner Sarah Martin, a former GP, adds: "When I was practising, I had so many lesbian patients who had been through depression, which was often as a result of keeping a secret for a long time."

Mental health issues can be exacerbated by substance abuse, she notes. "It's also known that there is a higher rate of alcohol and cannabis use amongst LGBT people, which can trigger mental illness, which then becomes part of a dual diagnosis. It's very common for mental health issues to improve when the substance abuse stops."

Even finding help can be problematic: "There are issues around who you can trust. Many LGBT people don't trust their doctor and don't seek help in time since they are so used to dealing with problems on their own."

Recent research concludes that bisexual women have an even higher incidence of mental health issues than lesbians. Our culture tends to assume that people are either gay or straight, so bi people suffer from lack of visibility as well as stereotypes that depict them as greedy, promiscuous and untrustworthy. Many face double discrimination from both straight and lesbian/gay communities, which can jeopardise their mental health since they can feel that they have nowhere

to turn for support and acceptance.

The new research addresses the findings in a 2007 Stonewall survey of lesbian and bi women's health, concentrating on the bisexual respondents. It found that bi women are more likely than lesbians to report eating problems, self-harm, depressed feelings and anxiety, even though they appeared less likely to be out about their sexual orientation and experienced less sexuality-based discrimination.

"Bisexual respondents may have concealed their sexual orientation more deeply, because they experienced greater felt and/or internalised stigma than lesbians," state the researchers, adding that "concealment is known to be related to poorer mental health in sexual minority women". Other studies have shown that bi women are less likely than lesbians to receive support from family or mental health professionals, and are less likely to engage with LGBT community events and services.

Dr Meg John Barker, a senior lecturer in Psychology at the Open University and co-author of The Bisexuality Report, notes that that mental health issues may well be higher amongst older bi people since there is often an even greater tendency for them to be invisible. "Older people in general are often seen as not having a sexuality and bisexual life-histories can often be re-written by friends/families/carers to ignore that person's same-sex relationships and only focus on the other-sex ones."


They added that, "Coming out can

be a little more complex for bi people. On the whole, it's definitely good for mental health for people to be open about themselves. However, for a lot of bi people, they find they are re-closeted by the people who they come out to, who won't believe that they are really bi, or who feel threatened by it".

There is no doubt that recent legislation has contributed to increased acceptance of LGBT people, but has that resulted in a decline in mental illness and distress?

"No, I don't think it has," says Jeremy Taylor, head of policy at Stonewall. "What we've probably got better at though is talking about mental health – taking it from a taboo to being able to speak about it openly."

Mental illness itself can result in prejudice and discrimination, he points out, with LGBT people effectively carrying a double burden. "There is still lots of work to do and many people with mental health issues face discrimination from employers, friends and family but we are definitely on the right track."

So, let's keep talking. 

Mental Health Awareness Week, 11-17 May

mentalhealth.org.uk

pacehealth.org.uk

Poorer Mental Health In UK Bisexual Women Than Lesbians: Evidence From The UK 2007 Stonewall Women's Health Survey

tinyurl.com/BiWomenMentalHealth

The Bisexuality Report, 2012

tinyurl.com/TheBisexualityReport

[@katrinaallen21](https://twitter.com/katrinaallen21)

"Depression was often the result of keeping a secret for a long time"

Graph: Measuring the impact of prejudice



Source: Stonewall Survey

SUNDAY
10 MAY

BRIGHTON EQUALITY WALK

Stonewall



Raise vital funds to help stamp out bullying and discrimination by taking part in this fun community walk.

Open to people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

- ★ 10k or 3k route
- ★ 12pm start, garden party until 6pm
- ★ Live music, food, children's entertainment
- ★ Registration £15, children 12 and under go free

Have fun and raise money for LGBT equality!

sign up now at equalitywalk.org.uk

☎ 020 7593 1875 | ✉ equalitywalk@stonewall.org.uk | 🐦 @equalitywalk

Reg. charity number 1101255. Photography courtesy of Simon Callaghan.

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West Pier

After Party

Royal Pavilion



Fry's delight: Giving till it hurts

Tired and tri-curious

To many of us May conjures up day-dreams of lazy evenings by a river with a strawberry in one hand and a glass of champers in the other. To increasing numbers of women, however, May also heralds the start of the triathlon season, initiating a summer of sporty challenges.

Just in case you're not yet acquainted with this tripartite sport: triathlons are endurance races – some friendly and some fierce – that involve swimming, cycling and running in quick succession. Speed is of the essence – even the costume changes in “transition” are timed – thus, ripping your clothes off at speed becomes the artform you always knew it was. I'll admit it was partly this that attracted me to the sport (though, sadly, undressing, when it involves the removal of a wetsuit, isn't remotely sexy), but I also fancied a new challenge. I wanted to find out what it was about this demanding, seemingly addictive sport that was getting so many women I knew off the sofa and onto the start line. So in 2013-2014 I set myself the task of devoting

a year to triathlon. This would involve plenty of training, five races (two in foreign climes) and a 10-day warm-weather training camp in Lanzarote, all whilst holding down a job and a relationship, and trying to maintain a sense of perspective – my sanity.

There were a few major issues. I was a dreadful swimmer, terrified of cycling on the thin tyres of a road bike and already injured enough to make running tricky. But, sure enough, the end of my 12 triathlon-centric months, I'd emerged stronger and faster than before and discovered the crucial facets of triathlon. 1) Its community is as welcoming, obsessive and inspiring as the races are rewarding. 2) The training involved in, and cost of, being a triathlete can be never-ending (so you need to set some limits and a budget or you might tip over the edge into exhaustion or bankruptcy). Oh and, 3) Getting straight off a bike after a 40km hard ride (and a 1,500m swim) and trying to run 10km? Let's just say I got to know what the term “jelly legs” really feels like, and it's not entirely pleasant.

TRIATHLETE
LUCY FRY
LOVES
NOTHING
MORE THAN
PUSHING
HERSELF TO
THE POINT OF
EXHAUSTION

Ripping
your
clothes off
at speed
becomes
an artform

Triathlon, however seriously or frivolously you approach it, offers a fantastic opportunity to get fitter; there's always something to be worked on, an area to be improved and an opportunity for growth. You can start small with a super-sprint event (usually a 400m swim, 15km ride and 3km run), graduate to a sprint (750m swim, 20km ride and 5km run), aim for Olympic distance (1,500m swim, 40km ride, 10km run) or test your mettle to the max with a very long distance event, like a half or full Ironman.

Having grown up (and fast) in the 1980s and 1990s, as a sport triathlon wasn't encumbered by much of the historic sexism that many of us have fought against, and hard. Though there's a way to go vis-a-vis media coverage of professional female triathlon races (in comparison to male), women race the same distances as men and are paid the same in almost all high-level competitions.

Perhaps because of its meritocratic side too (as a rookie it's highly likely that in your first couple of seasons you'll see a very steep upward curve in performance), triathlon seems to attract some extraordinary characters. During my challenge, I was whipped into shape by an Irish amateur triathlete who fitted her training in around a demanding job in banking. I spent time with a Scottish woman in her 40s, whose battle against neurological pain was made bearable by its facilitating her representing her country as a paratriathlete. I took advice from, and made friends with, women of all backgrounds, sexualities and walks of life, including a lesbian couple who chose to take part in an Ironman (ultra endurance triathlon) event in lieu of a civil partnership.

Each of them had their own reasons for dipping a toe into triathlon a few years previously, and, like me, quickly found themselves immersed in it, intoxicated by both the camaraderie and the competition. It is only now, with a little distance, that I can truly see why: becoming a triathlete will leave you simultaneously exhausted, energised and exhilarated. So go get it, ladies. I dare you. If I can do it, anyone can. **D**

Run, Ride, Sink Or Swim: A Year In The Exhilarating And Addictive World Of Women's Triathlon, by Lucy Fry, is published in May by Faber & Faber (£14.99) See review, p37

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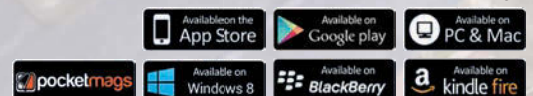
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BONUS DIGITAL CONTENT IN THIS ISSUE:

OUR MAY ISSUE FEATURES AN EXCLUSIVE SERIES OF BEHIND-THE-SCENES SNAPS FROM OUR SEX ISSUE COVER SHOOT, THERE'S A TRAILER FROM CAROL MORLEY'S BRILLIANT FILM THE FALLING AND FINALLY, CATCH DRAG KING ADAM ALL PERFORMING HIS HILARIOUS VERSION OF FOOTLOOSE

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AVAILABLE ON

I love an excuse to search the corners of the web for new gadgets and toys. This month being the Sex Issue, it was particularly fun. Sex and technology are, in my opinion, natural bedfellows. Advances in the internet of things (IoT) are revealing their true value at last. No longer do you have to be near someone to get jiggy with them, nor do you need to rely on the one-dimensional medium of the old-fashioned telephone; oh, no – now you can literally be on the other side of the world whilst diddling your partner via an iPhone app and internet-enabled vibrator. The world is truly a marvellous place.

Rhoda Meek is an IT consultant and designer with a social media addiction, a crochet habit, a RaspberryPi and two left feet.

wodieskodie.com
[@wodieskodie](https://twitter.com/wodieskodie)



TECHNOLOGY

IT'S PLAYTIME!

SEX AND TECH: A GEEK MARRIAGE
MADE IN HEAVEN

TIME FOR HAPPY PLAY TIME!

This month, I stumbled across an app which made me laugh out loud, in a good way. Meet HappyPlayTime, an app designed to teach women to masturbate effectively. It features a dancing ladygarden, complete with arms, legs and eyes.

Joking aside, it does have a serious aim. HappyPlayTime is a sex education game with the goal of eliminating the stigma around female masturbation.

Its creators say: "Make Happy (your friendly neighbourhood vulva) orgasm by stimulating her body using your fingers or mouse in a certain pattern. Unlock new moves, powerups and lessons by giving her more orgasms." The app's mission is to create a healthier understanding of self and sexuality. "Being comfortable with your own sexual pleasure is a prerequisite to both being able to healthily accept pleasure from others, and pleasing others. How can you exchange pleasure with someone else if you don't understand what your own body likes? That's why masturbation, and learning how to masturbate is such a fundamental life lesson."

That's a pretty good thing to believe in. If you believe in it too, give it a whirl. If nothing else, it will brighten up a morning commute. (The game, I mean...) It can be played on mobile or desktop, but I found that using a mouse was trickier than old-fashioned fingers.

happyplaytime.com



WHAT'S
YOUR CURRENT
GEEKY OBSESSION?
LET ME KNOW!
GEEK@DIVAMAG.
CO.UK

YOU HAVE A FRIEND IN FREBBLE

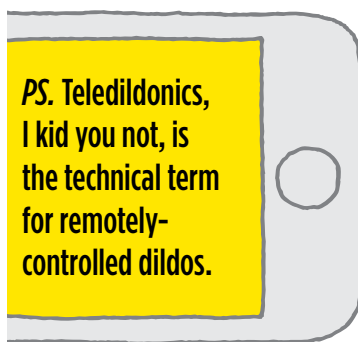
On a less sexual note, the internet-enabled world is a place of never-ending innovation, and this month, I am delighted to introduce you to the Frebble.

Frebbe is an accessory designed to allow you to hold hands with someone at a distance: when you squeeze it, the other person feels your squeeze. It's sweet, it's cute, it's colourful but if I am honest, it looks like a cross between a baby monitor and a vibrator, and I am not entirely sure how often it would be used. It's a bit like that pasta-maker you were given once for Christmas. Used ap-

proximately twice, it takes up space in the back of the cupboard. However, if you are a long way from your love, this might be lovely while watching telly in the evening.

myfrebble.com

PS. Teledildonics,
I kid you not, is
the technical term
for remotely-
controlled dildos.



LELO ORA

A sophisticated designer oral-sex simulator with 10 powerful functions, this ergonomic designer toy will give you the feels in all the right places. Ora fits snugly into your hand and the oral-sex simulator bit is a stealthy and attentive "nub" that circles and throbs at different speeds and intensities. Bonus point: Ora's subtle design will spare your blushes if you accidentally drop it from your bag in public. (DA)

£119

tinyurl.com/DIVA0ra



3D PRINT THE PERFECT SEX TOY

Should you be lucky enough to have access to a 3D printer, the world is your oyster, and thanks to Makerlove, it should keep any pearl happy. Makerlove is collecting designs for 3D printed sex toys, and making them available for free. They even have an ongoing contest to generate new ideas from people all over the world. Designers are encouraged to submit their designs and the best ones will win a cash prize and then be shared with everyone. 3D printers aren't yet affordable for most of us, but the price is coming down every month.

Put one on your Christmas list now, and you could be printing yourself into a happy playtime by the end of the year.

makerlove.com



DIVAR April / May



UNTIL 01.06

MY BED

Tate Britain, London

It's back! In all its vodka-sodden, bloody-pants-strewn, horribly raw and freshly stale beauty The Bed returns after a 15-year lie-in. See Tracey Emin's masterpiece alongside Francis Bacon's tortured paintwork this spring.

tate.org.uk

25-26.04

QUEER VISION

Watershed, Bristol

Hey, turns out there are, like, a lot of gay films and gay filmmakers out there making gay films. It's just the important people would prefer us to talk about Bird-man. To right this wrong, Bristol presents Queer Vision! A weekend of dynamite films about people seeking, finding, losing and loving other people.

tinyurl.com/DIVAQueerVision

26.04

FEMMES FOR FEMMES

Tribeca, Manchester

Are you a sucker for a woman with a beauty regime that comprises of more than water → towel → roll-on? Have you got a thing for awards-ready Cara Delevigne? Are you or have you ever dated Cara Delevigne? Then this one is for you. (Other dates around the UK.)

pinklobsterdating.com

27.04

TEXAS

Sage Gateshead, Newcastle

You can say what you want but it won't change my mind, I feel the same about Sharleen Spiteri, despite all those vicious straight rumours. Keeping floppy black hair in gay bars since the early 90s. (See website for full tour dates.)

texas.uk.com

30.04-02.06

JEN BRISTER

Soho Theatre, London

Perfectly timed ahead of the general election, Jen Brister's brand new show, Wishful Thinking, is all about politics. And going to the garden centre.

tinyurl.com/DIVABrister

STUFF TO CHANGE YOUR MIND AND CHEER YOU UP, PLUS THE FIRST PRIDE OF THE YEAR!

1.05

ME YOU WE

Star Of Kings, London

Night foundlings Signs & Sounds present the first evah Me You We, an event exploring issues around identity. Catch Young Feminist London and Claudia Heidegger among others.

signsandsoundsmusic.com

2.05

BRIGHTON FESTIVAL

Citywide venues, Brighton

Jackie Kay and Carol Ann Duffy, Jeanette Winterson, Philip Pulman on Tove Jansson, Kate blinking Tempest! Not to mention thinking woman's crumpet Ali Smith as guest director! More word-happy queer writers than your dream dinner party. Book fast.

brightonfestival.org

3.05**MOON TALES***Exeter Street Hall, Brighton*

Kate Darach's new play comprises of 13 tales inspired by the old names for the full moons. Moon Tales is a celestial mission into the particular and universal aspects of womanhood.

somethingunderground.co.uk

8.05**BOIS AND GRRRLS***Royal Vauxhall Tavern, London*

Las Vauxhall, baby! The RVT will transform into the desert of debauchery this May for an Oceans 11 inspired Female Masculinity Appreciation Society (FMAS). Work those biceps, bois, lay it all on black and spin!

tinyurl.com/DIVAfmas

16.05**EXETER PRIDE***St Sidwell's Centre, Exeter*

And the first Pride of the season is... EXETER! Kick off a summer of misbegotten texts and a worrying face paint dependency with a rousing march in the South West.

exeterpride.co.uk

17.5**MASHA GESSEN ON PUSSY RIOT***Brighton Dome Studio Theatre, Brighton*

Masha Gessen says, at one point, she was "probably the only publicly out gay person in the whole of Russia". Come bask in the intellect of the author and activist as she talks about her new book on those pesky Putin-aggravators Pussy Riot.

23.05**ESG***Oval Space, London*

The much-mythologised Scroggins Sisters (ESG) bring their alien DIY grunge funk to the UK this May. At the risk of sounding melodramatic: THIS MIGHT BE THEIR FINALTUR EVER. THEY'RE SO IMPORTANT. GIVE THEM YOUR MONEY!!!

tinyurl.com/DIVAESG



WHAT'S
HAPPENING
WHERE
YOU
ARE?

Send your listings to
dora@divamag.co.uk

For weekly listings,
visit divamag.co.uk

**9.05****GJRL PRESENTS LEMON JUICE***Venue TBC, London*

GJRL collective, also known as four very radical babes, have sorted out another super-cool-lesbian-nightlife-experience for you! Sell your soul to noise and women under the flashing lights and don't forget to juice the binary yeah.

cargocollective.com/GJRL

Introduced by the equally wonderful and subversive Ali Smith.

tinyurl.com/DIVAMasha

27.05**NO NEED TO SHOUT***Grandad's Gallery, London*

Over the past six months Liam has been working with his grandson, drag artist Scottee, in an effort to use art to tackle ageism. See the result in Queens Crescent NW5; somewhere both Liam and Scottee think of as home.

realliamgallagher.co.uk

28.05**LOOK AT ME!***Komedia, Brighton*

Can changing our outsides change our insides? Award-winning performer Juliette Burton's been fat, thin and everything between. Continuing her experiments with appearance and reality she'll try dressing sexy, wearing the hijab, being male, obese, old and nude.

julietteburton.co.uk

BOOK AHEAD | BOOK AHEAD | BOOK AHEAD | BOOK AHEAD

BOOK AHEAD | BOOK AHEAD | BOOK AHEAD | BOOK AHEAD

13-16.08**SHOW SOME BISEXUAL REALNESS!***Nottingham University Park Campus, Nottingham*

Bisexuals exist, and this weekend also exists to recognise the existence of bisexuals and those who identify as bisexual. Talks, fairs, DJs, quiet spaces, lots of chatting and bonding, dancing and sharing. Book now to avoid disappointment!

2015.bicon.org.uk

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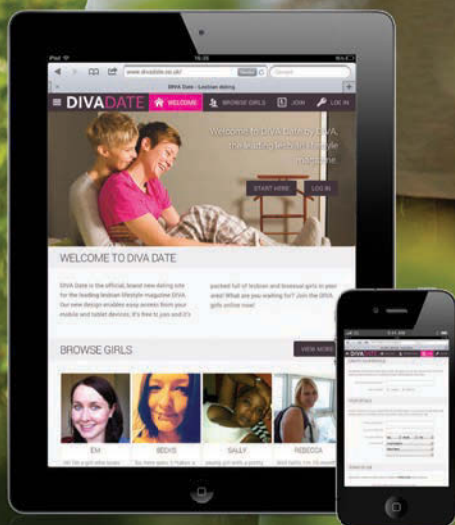
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“I joined, met the love of my life within a week and 3 years on we’re getting married. All thanks to DIVA Date!”

“Just a little message to say thank you, you put me in touch with one of the most amazing women I’ve ever met”





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wishes everyone
a safe and happy Pride

*Taking Pride in a
diverse legal profession!*



sra.org.uk/pride